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GALILEE GALLOPER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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—*Sunday Despatch.*





"ABU GEORGE" RECEIVING THE M B E FROM THE  
HIGH COMMISSIONER

*November 11th, 1930*

# GALILEE GALLOPER

By

DOUGLAS V. DUFF

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.



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## PREFACE

THE incidents in this chronicle of the life of yet another soldier of the Last Crusade, may, I hope, serve as a further commentary on the first years of Britain's Mandate over Palestine, for it is with the Holy Land, the Land of Outremer, as the Crusaders called it, that this chronicle mainly concerns itself.

Abu George, whose story it is, is alive and flourishing to-day, but this tale was not obtained in one interview or a dozen talks, neither did I receive them consecutively, nor in their order. Still less had Abu George any idea that he was recounting a story that was anything out of the ordinary. A great deal of the material was obtained through the fact that the author served in the same Force for many years, and actually observed much of what is here set down ; the rest was obtained in queer situations, on dangerous patrols, in times of dire peril as well as in military messes and hotels, and it took ten years of comradeship ere the chronicle was ready for the pen.

May I also be forgiven for referring to him continually as " Abu George " ? It was his title, given him by the Arabs he ruled, and he is the one solitary Briton that has been so honoured in Palestine by the humble folk of the peasant villages and the long, black tents. It means, actually, " The Father of George," the name of his son, but, simple as it is, it betrays the fact that the

## P R E F A C E

Arabs looked on him as one of themselves. There is no higher honour than that, for the Arab looks on the Frank with supreme contempt, even though that Frank sits in the seat of the High Commissioner, and the Arab is the convict who sweeps the passage-floor outside the office.

I have heard Arab mothers in the hills of Galilee frightening fractious children with the threat of giving them to Abu George, and have seen the little brown mites grow quiet in dismay when they heard the name of the burly, blue-eyed Frankish officer who so ruthlessly maintained peace in the two Galilees.

DOUGLAS V. DUFF.

## CHAPTER ONE

### “ABU GEORGE OF ACRE”

**D**URING the ten years in which my sword, now hanging so inertly and seemingly innocent on the walls of my Wessex farmhouse, was in the hired service of the Holy Land, the strangest, the queerest, the most detested and the best beloved, the worst execrated and most highly lauded man I knew, was Abu George.

He was, despite the name bestowed upon him by the Bedouin, of British blood, born in that most English of towns, Bath. A roaring, ranting, pugnacious, efficient, devil-may-care, five-feet-eleven-inches, seventeen-stone paradox of a man, with a strain of tenderness, quixotic chivalry and loyalty, that, with his other qualities, brought irresistibly to mind the figure of Samkin Aylward, champion archer of the White Company. A burly, sturdy figure, face tanned and seamed by years in the saddle, grim mouth and bristling brows, he was a formidable personality ; but the grey strength of the features was belied by twinkling, humorous blue eyes, seemingly misplaced in such a face.

He ruled with a rod of iron, yet with even-handed cold impartiality and justice, over nearly a thousand convicts in the great castle of the Hospitallers in St. John of Acre. He administered with sympathy and

freezing ferocity towards disturbers of the peace, the large and turbulent District of Acre, with its hotch-potch of nationalities, bloods and religions, all bitterly and mutually hostile towards each other. Often did his convicts try to cut short his career with chisels or axes stolen from the blacksmiths' or carpenters' sections of the prisons, still more often were attempts made against his life by the brigands and criminals whom he had sworn to extirpate from the mountains of Upper Galilee. After a year or so, however, they had learned wisdom. On one occasion, attacked by five convicts in a dark part of the prison (three of them had been notorious brigands, and four of them were as large and strong as he was himself), Abu George sprang to battle with a howl of pure joy, and slowly, methodically, and painstakingly commenced to tear them apart, and, in the few minutes before the roars and screams of his attackers brought the warders running to the scene, he had reduced the five armed convicts to battered and abject subjection. Several times attempts were made to lead him into ambushes, but when the lurking riflemen discovered, to their terror, that their burly foe, instead of running his head into the noose, had, by the favour of Shaitan, the Evil One, who undoubtedly was related to him, got above them on the hillsides with his police and held them in the hollow of his hand, they thought it wise to leave Abu George alone.

From this it was not far to a sulky acceptance of the man who had been sent to rule them, and thence to a respect and even a sneaking regard for him, when they saw that he was not frightened of them, that he even expected them to be scared of him. But Abu George, when they bestowed the name upon him, cared as little

## HOSPITALLERS' CASTLE

for their respect as he did for their hatred, and trusted them no farther than he had done previously, and that is, probably, the only reason why he is living to-day.

Two general mutinies in the prison he suppressed by the sheer dominance of his personality. One, that broke out whilst he was away rounding up a brigand gang in the hills, and was well advanced by the time he was able to return, he crushed, bloodily and mercilessly, until he had the whole desperate horde of convicts as quiet as a girls' boarding-school. He then returned and captured his brigands, after a fierce skirmish in which four of them were killed, and his personal orderly was shot dead as he was speaking to him. Criminals left Acre police division severely alone, punishment was inevitable if they disturbed the peace of the territory administered by the blue-eyed terror in the north. They were certain of betrayal by the local inhabitants, as they were more scared of Abu George, and his seemingly omniscient intelligence system, than they were of the worst threats of the criminals. There were dozens who would have given all that they possessed to hear that Abu George was dead, preferably after many and excruciating torments, and there were not a few who tried to put their wishes into execution, always with disastrous results to themselves.

The first time that I met Abu George was when I was seconded from the British Gendarmerie to the Palestine Port Police, the native coastguard and anti-smuggling force of the Government. We had received information that a large consignment of contraband tobacco and drugs had been "run" over the northern frontier into Acre Division, close to the border villages of Maalia and Tershiha, and I had to go to Acre to make

contact with Abu George, the officer in command of the area.

I walked into his office, in the decrepit old police buildings on the northern ramparts, and saluted the burly figure, crowned by a black sheepskin *kalpak*, that sat behind the broad desk in front of me. He grinned broadly, and told me to take a seat until he had finished with a bundle of files that lay before him.

“ Have you come from David Wainwright ? ” he asked.

I explained that Wainwright, commandant of the coastguard had suggested that it would be a good thing if I made contact with him.

“ That’ll be all right, old man. Have a smoke for a while, and then come round to my house and we will have some dinner and talk it over. You won’t be able to get started to-night in any case, so you had better sleep at my place and I will have an escort ready for you by dawn.”

I thanked him and gladly took advantage of his invitation to have a look round the prison whilst he was finishing up his office-work. As I came out of the door of the police buildings I was faced, on the farther side of a deep, dry moat, by the towering curtain-walls and massive towers of the ancient Crusaders’ castle, the stronghold of the Hospitaller Knights. The outer walls and the massive Keep were in perfect repair, for the fortifications of the city had been entirely renovated by Jezzar Pasha the Butcher, in the late eighteenth century.

The moat was spanned by a narrow stone bridge, which ended in a small, stout postern gate in the curtain-wall of the castle. I crossed over, and, after being suspiciously studied by a succession of eyes at a small Judas-wicket in the postern-gate, I was, at long length,

grudgingly admitted into a stone-flagged entrance hall. A native officer stepped up to me at once, and told me to unbuckle my pistol-belt and leave the weapon in the adjacent guard-room. I objected strongly, one did not lightly part company with one's weapons in those early days of our occupation of the Holy Land, and I thought that it would be especially useful when amongst a horde of desperate criminals. I saw the force of the regulation at once, however, when the officer explained that I was not in the least danger of attack in the prison as long as I had nothing worth taking, but that if I entered with a gun on my belt, I might well expect to be jumped by the convicts in an attempt to obtain my weapon, and so, unbuckling the belt, I was allowed in.

I entered a great courtyard, cut into quarters by barbed-wire entanglements. Round the four sides ran a covered arcade, on the inner side of which were a row of steel-grilled doors, leading to the large cells. These were entirely unlike anything else of the sort that I had seen up to that time, for they accommodated up to forty prisoners in each room, and were much lighter and airier than are the cells in an English prison.

Small industries were also being started, I noticed, in some of the outlying parts of the old castle. In the great hall which had been the banqueting-room of the Knights, the old columns had been ruthlessly pulled down, and a lot of fine old mural paintings, one of which seemed to bear a great resemblance to a Raising of Lazarus, had been ruthlessly destroyed by the erection of primitive and cumbrous looms. These looms were being tended by convicts dressed in grotesque black-and-white hooped clothes, designed, I shrewdly suspected, by one of our civilian officials with a taste for American films.

In another part, where had once stood the armoury of the Hospitallers, and which had been used, centuries later, by the Acre governors as part of their *harem*, were a row of cells in which were confined the lunatics, criminal and otherwise, for Palestine has not sufficient accommodation for the mentally unfit, and most of these unfortunates have to suffer the further ignominy of penal confinement. Again a fine mediæval relic had been ruthlessly sacrificed to the ignorance of those who erected this prison on one of the most sacred spots of all this Holy Land.

As I came out of the lunatic ward, I met Abu George looking for me.

“ Well, what do you think of my little boarding-school ? ” he said.

I told him how interested I was in all that I had seen, and then noticed, suddenly, that the quiet, busy hum of subdued voices that had filled the buildings seemed to have died completely away, and a deadly, brooding silence had settled down. I remarked upon it, and Abu George grinned quietly.

“ Part of the discipline, old man ; they know better than to speak when the ‘ prison wireless ’ gets around that I have entered the gate. This was the devil of a place when I took it over. I was the first British officer to have charge of a prison in Palestine, and I found that the prisoners were more like hotel guests than convicts. Come over here, and I will show you something,” and he led me across to an angle in the castle walls, showing me a huge, bricked-up archway.

“ This was the entrance to the place when I took over. It leads right into the main street of the city, and all the prisoners who could pay for the privilege used to

sit here and hold conversations with their pals and relations. The place was full of tobacco, drugs and 'hooch,' at least for those who could pay for it. There were native officers in charge here, and you can imagine what sort of discipline there was. A convict with plenty of money could do pretty much what he liked, and I had the devil's own job to get things shipshape. The staff was rotten, they are still pretty bad, but they are far too scared of me to try and do things on the scale that they did before I came. Escapes were a daily occurrence and our 'bad hats' used to grin at the idea of being sent to prison so long as they, or their relations, had sufficient money to pay the staff to allow them to clear out."

"But what about the great majority who were too poor to be able to offer bribes?" I inquired.

"They 'went through the hoop,'" he replied. "The staff saw that their lives were made so confoundedly hard that it was not long before some of their relations either borrowed, or stole, sufficient to ease matters for them. It was just like one of the pre-War Ottoman prisons, run by the same people who used to control the penal settlements, in the days before we took the country."

As we were leaving the prison I remarked on the strength of the massive postern-gate leading on to the bridge. Abu George grinned.

"There was no gate at all here, when I took over," he said, "just a flimsy barbed-wire grille. I asked continually for a gate to be fixed, but you know our Government as well as I do, and they just sat tight and refused to give me anything. I took a gang of convicts out one night into the town and 'pinched' this gate from another building. It took me quite a time to decide upon which

one to take. I went all over the place for nights, measuring up likely looking doors, until I found this one. As soon as I had found it I took half a dozen burglars from the cells, marched them down town after midnight, and took the gate without the owner even hearing us. It took twenty men to carry it up here, but I had it in place, with different-looking hinges and metalwork, a fresh coat of paint and new bolts on it before dawn. The prisoners were on the Jerusalem train before breakfast, transferred to the prison there, and by the time I arrived at the office in the police station the gate looked as though it had been hanging in the postern for years.”

“ Didn’t the owner kick up a row ? ” I asked.

“ Of course he did. I took his statement down myself, inspected his open doorway, took measurements, and told him that he could expect to have his property back without delay.”

Having retrieved my belt and arms from the native officer in the guard-room, I walked down the ramparts towards the breach that led to Abu George’s house on the seashore to the north of the town. His wife and family were not at home, for, he explained, they had gone across to Haifa, to spend a holiday on Mount Carmel, and to see the festivities at the great Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. After dinner, he yawned prodigiously and then, hoisting himself out of his chair, said :

“ Well, Duff, there is just one more job before we turn in. Like to come along with me ? ”

I was only too glad to accompany him, and we strolled along the shore back into the city. As we passed through the breach in the walls, he remarked :

“ Interesting place that breach. We were widening

it the other day and came upon a pyramid of human skulls built into the wall. Seems that old Jezzar Pasha was a good hand at driving these Acre people to do their work. When they slacked he cut off a few heads, and made the remainder build them into the wall. That's one way of dealing with Labour unrest."

We continued our way along the sea-wall and dived down some incredibly narrow, winding side-streets between the houses.

"I am going to take you to a most interesting place, Duff," he said as we walked along. "It is just along here; it was the great church of the Hospitallers, and is right underneath part of the prison. Most of it was filled with earth by Jezzar Pasha, so as to carry the weight of the castle above, but the earth has settled, and we can enter at street-level and find ourselves, with about fifteen feet of space, between the earth and the old ceiling of the church."

I was extremely interested. I remembered having read of the great funeral accorded by St. Louis of France to the body of a martyred French Crusader, whose remains had been restored to the Christian host on the return of that king from his shameful imprisonment, after his disastrous Egyptian campaign. The *Sieur de Joinville* has described the funeral most minutely in his chronicle of the Crusade, and I asked Abu George if he knew anything about the interior of the building.

"Yes," he answered, "I have been trying hard to find the tomb old de Joinville mentioned, and I have had a gang of convicts digging here; but, after I had actually reached the old floor, the weight of Jezzar's new fortifications in the castle above was too much, and I had to stop in case the whole place collapsed."

“ But why did you not inform the Antiquities Department and get them to do the job ? ” I asked.

“ Don’t be a fool,” he snorted ; “ first of all what would our Headquarters think of a police officer who showed that he knew anything at all about the old things of this country ? They would either think I was posing, or else get so fearfully worked up at the idea that I knew something about which they had no inkling, that they would seek some way of getting rid of me, in case I got too well thought of by someone outside their own circle. You have not been as long out here as I, and, take my advice, be very careful about appearing intelligent.”

I kept quiet as we walked along, for, in those days, I still believed in the integrity and disinterestedness of the Service. As we went farther down the long street, I asked Abu George the reason for this sightseeing trip in the dark.

He chuckled hugely. “ I told you that this chapel is immediately beneath some of the cells, didn’t I ? When you get in you will see that the roof is supported by great masonry columns about twenty-five feet in circumference. Some of the ‘ boys ’ who were working here doing my excavations, evidently discovered that their cell was immediately above, and, about three weeks ago, they commenced digging through their floor in order to get down here and escape by the gate I will take you through in a minute. It is only a flimsy affair of pine planks intended to keep people from throwing their rubbish down the hole I had made.

“ I discovered their attempt about a fortnight ago when I was inspecting their cell. They had one of their bed-mats slightly out of alignment, and I kicked it in order to put it in line. To my surprise it sagged, and I

found a hole about six feet deep beneath it. The clever devils have been taking out the rubble and earth in their shirts and latrine buckets. I have found their dump, it is close to one of the small wells at the back of the old banqueting hall, where they are employed as weavers."

"But why didn't you stop them at once?" I asked. "They might have escaped before this, and got clear away."

Again the chuckle. "You don't know much about the mentality of our Arab brother, my lad. Anyone could kick up a row on finding such a thing, the convicts would just consider it a matter of bad luck, and immediately start some other plan. I have taken the most careful measurements, and I have listened to them working for several nights. They have struck the top of one of the masonry supporting columns, which are filled with rubble, *and they are digging straight down the centre of the column.* If they only knew it, a few hours' work on either side would release them, for they are over nine feet down from the ceiling, and there is nothing to keep them in, except the outside masonry. Come in and listen to them. I do so every night, just to make sure that nothing has gone wrong."

"But suppose that they broke through after you had gone home?" I asked.

"No chance of that," he replied. "I have arranged things up above, without any of the warders knowing the reason. One of the sentries takes up his post outside their window, ostensibly to watch the corridor, after ten o'clock, so there is no chance of them doing any more work. Well, here we are; keep quite quiet, and don't say a word until we get out again."

He opened the door under the archway which leads to

the old baths of Acre, and we crept over the rubble heap that covered, forty feet deep, the mosaics and tiling of the floor of the Crusaders' church. Close overhead, in the brilliant beam of my torch, I saw the vaulted arches of the roof, and, following Abu George, I crept softly, all noise of footfalls deadened by the surrounding earth, to the huge column he pointed out. All around us other columns branched away into the dim darkness, whilst he suddenly flashed his torch downwards to indicate to me the yawning chasm that led down to the bottom of the excavation he had made. Abu George beckoned me up to the column, and, inside it, I could hear, almost on a level with my ear, the sound of digging and muffled voices speaking Arabic. Round the column crept Abu George, carefully inspecting it to see if there was any sign of a breach, and then quietly led the way back to the door.

Once outside I asked him if he was not scared that they would discover the situation and get out.

“ Not a bit of it,” he replied ; “ the two leading lads in that party are professional well-diggers, and they know only too well the danger of digging laterally from a shaft. They will go on going down and down, until they give it up in despair.”

And it actually turned out in this fashion. For nearly three months the convicts continued digging, long before that they had passed the area of the column exposed to the air, and were deep buried in the earth. Then, one night, Abu George decided to put an end to the game. Quietly he removed a stone in the facing, and listened to the party working some twenty feet below him.

“ *Ya Wallad ! Shu besowi hunakh ?* What are you doing down there, my boys ? ”

There was a momentary frightened silence at the

bottom of the well, whilst those in the cells above, drawing up the shirts that were doing duty as earth-baskets, held their breath.

"*Wullahi*," swore a voice. "As Allah is my Judge, 'tis the voice of Abu George!"

"I see you, *Wallad*, my lads, and I know what you are doing," went on Abu George, and, quickly replacing the stone, stole away.

The next night he listened to a conference between the badly scared men. Some thought that he had actually found out their plan, others that it was some evil spirit. They argued that, if Abu George had really known about their digging, he would have made public his knowledge and punished them. It must, therefore, have been an *afrit*, an evil, maliciously humorous spirit, who had made the remark. In any case they could test it that night, as they had all been told that he had gone to Haifa to a dinner. He let them work for a while, then again hailed them, told them to replace all the earth they had taken out of the shaft, and to close it down.

In the ensuing six months he noticed with grim amusement that the pile of rubble and earth in the old well in the banqueting hall grew gradually lower, for every man in the cell took back as much of it as he dared, when returning after the end of the day's work. On some nights he encouraged them through the hole in the column, until all were convinced that he had, as an ally, some foul spirit from the nethermost Pit, a fiend that spoke with the voice and strange accent of Abu George himself. Then, one morning, he walked into their cell, before the convicts started to work, pushed aside a mat, looked at the place where the hole had been, and told them that it had better be cemented as it looked very worn, for

they had been unable to replace the cement, but had made a very passable imitation with trodden earth and water.

They all looked at him in awe as he turned on his heel, and said :

“ *Dir Balkhum, ya Wallad.* Be wary, my lads, even when I sleep my spirit walks, and it has walked for many nights.”

Play-acting ? Childish ? Not by any means. Abu George was never that. He never did anything without a purpose. That incident closed all trouble in that prison. Never were there any more attempts to escape, no bribes were offered to warders ; police and native officers alike were too afraid of the occult powers of the burly Governor to risk anything, and the prison settled down to quietness and discipline, such as the old building had never known since the days when the black mantles of the austere Hospitallers had fluttered along its ramparts.

But to resume my account of my first meeting with Abu George : We returned from the ruined Church of the Knights to his house, accompanied by the little Scotch terrier that had been his constant companion in the mud of Flanders, the horrors of Passchendaele, had been with him when he won his decoration for gallantry in action, had accompanied him to the mountains of the Italian front, and then, through the civil disturbances and revolts of post-War Egypt, to his present position in Palestine.

Abu George was tired and stated his intention of turning in. I was quite agreeable as I had to start with the dawn. He took me to his largest bedroom, and said that, as his wife was away, he thought that we would both sleep in that room. There were two large windows facing towards the sea, and another, at right-angles, towards the town. He carefully fastened this window, and also the further

of the two sea windows, leaving the one at the foot of the large and ornately carved double-bed wide open.

Under the sill of this window there was a small camp-bed, which, he explained, he generally used, as he had to come in at odd hours of the night and did not like disturbing his wife. I demurred against sleeping in the comfortable bed whilst he used the small couch, but he would take no denial and forced me into it. I noticed that he laid two large pistols on the floor beside him, and asked to have the lamp left burning low. I took no particular notice of the pistols—I had my own under the pillow. In Palestine of those days one did not sleep very far from one's arms, and I was about to drop off to sleep, when I noticed that both of the closed windows were backed with what looked like sheets of steel, and that a slotted loophole had been cut in each one. Lazily I remarked upon this and he replied :

“ Oh, yes, quite. I expect that this house was occupied by a Turkish staff-officer during the war, and he would have had the armoured shutters put up as a precaution against a burst of machine-gun fire from some patrolling British destroyer. By the way, did you ever hear the story of the dinner-party given by the Governor of Acre to the Turkish generalissimo, Djemaal Pasha, during the war ? ”

I said that I hadn't, wishing that he would keep quiet and let me get off to sleep. But he was very wakeful and went on :

“ As far as I can make out the German officers had been spreading propaganda amongst the Arabs that the British were very short of food, that hunger would soon force them to abandon their entrenchments in front of Gaza, and to retire in disorder back across the Sinai Desert to

Egypt. To counteract this a couple of destroyers were sent here with orders to steam past the town and throw a lot of bread and tinned stuff, buoyed so that it would float, upon the water.

“ This duly impressed the townsfolk, but the Turkish Staff were very angry when they found that all the good tinned meats had been salved by fishermen and townsfolk and that there was nothing left for them. Accordingly orders were issued that, if the British repeated their tactics, all salved tins were to be brought to the Governor’s office under pain of the severest penalties.

“ A few days later the demonstration was repeated, and the tins were accordingly brought to the *serai*. It happened that Djemaal Pasha was coming to dinner that night, and the Governor was hard pressed for delicacies to offer him. He knew that no one had suffered any ill-effects from eating the earlier consignment of tins from the destroyers, and so was quite certain that the British had no intention of poisoning the inhabitants. He decided that the tins would be just the thing for the C.-in-C.’s dinner. He knew that Djemaal Pasha was very fond of tinned food, and that he always demanded it to be served to him without the tin being opened, as a certain precaution against his food being poisoned by his many enemies, a fate he dreaded intensely.

“ Accordingly, without divulging the history of how he became possessed of the tins, they were heated up in hot water, and duly presented to the great man as he sat at table. He ordered them to be opened before him—but the British sailors had interfered with some of the cans, and one of these tampered ones was the first to be opened. The seamen had removed the original contents and had refilled the can with some evil-smelling but harmless

“ ‘ WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS ! ’ ”

mixture. That dinner-party was not a success ! The poor old Governor fell into disfavour,” and Abu George chuckled until his canvas bed groaned protestingly.

I fell off to sleep, only to be again awakened by him about an hour later. “ Do you feel like a bottle of beer, Duff ? ” he asked me. I did—it was very hot in the room. I wished that he would open the other windows and put out the lamp, but he was adamant. I grumblingly climbed out of bed, and accompanied him along to his kitchen. At one end of the room there was the opening to a loft, about ten feet above the floor.

“ Come on, old man, the beer is in that loft. I’ll get the ladder, and we shall soon have some down.”

Now Abu George was over seventeen stone, an equivalent weight to my own, and so, when he returned saying that his orderly had taken the ladder to the prison for repairs and had forgotten to bring it back, and suggested that he should stand on my shoulders and reach the bottles, I refused violently.

He was just as decided in declining my offer to climb on to his shoulders. We tried a table. It was not high enough. Then we placed a chair upon the table, but it was a flimsy thing, and when he climbed on to it it collapsed. No beer, and we slaked our perspiring bodies with some of Acre’s excellent water, and crawled back to bed.

I was awakened at dawn by a trampling of hooves and got up to find that my escort had arrived. Abu George insisted on my having breakfast, cooked by his freshly arrived orderly, before I started. I thanked him for his courtesy and hospitality, especially for forgoing his big and comfortable bed in my favour.

“ Not at all, old man, don’t bother to thank me,” he said. “ As a matter of fact, I was very glad to have you.

You see I had to send my wife and kids away as I had reason to expect that a couple of the Zbeide Bedouin were going to make an attempt to shoot me in bed. I received information that they had sworn to do it in revenge for a brother of theirs that I arrested and who was hanged yesterday morning. You just fitted in with my scheme to trap them. I left the light burning purposely last night, and sweltered in that stuffy room, so that they could see you in bed and use the window I had left open. You are about my size, old man, and I felt sure that, if they took a plug at you as you lay in bed, I should easily be able to shoot both of them from my position beneath the window. Fortunately they were picked up by a plain-clothes patrol I stationed outside in the palm-grove. Well, good-bye and good luck on your search, I must be off to bed as I have not slept a wink all night. Cheerio ! ”

And, before my breath came back, after this colossal impertinence, he was inside, and I turned my horse's head towards the hills and rode off, thinking of the things I should have liked to say to Abu George.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ABU GEORGE'S BLOSSOMING

WE were worked to death in the Palestine Port Police, and, what was infinitely worse, we were often robbed of the kudos and rewards that long, patient, and very dangerous work should have given us. Times without number we would receive information from our secret agents (a glorious name for dope peddlars whom we held in the fear of long imprisonment, and who were forced to betray their associates) of the running of a cargo of contraband tobacco or drugs, only to be robbed both of the credit of capturing it and, incidentally, of the monetary reward, by divisional officers of Police, who had to be consulted before we could operate in their districts. They would permit us to make the seizures, they could not stop us, but they nearly always insisted on being present, as their rank would entitle them to a high percentage of the reward paid by the Customs and Excise, besides giving them an opportunity of writing a self-glorifying report to their Headquarters in Jerusalem.

This probably accounted for Abu George's presence aboard our motor-launch *Progress* on this stormy night in January, as we threshed our way, with every light darkened, along the coast between Acre and Ras-el-Nakoura, the northern sea-frontier of the Holy Land.

Although there was more than half a gale blowing—the wind was from north-east and inshore—there was not too big a sea. The old Turkish launch was making heavy weather of it, and shipping the short-breaking seas green over her stumpy little forecastle. We were patrolling on two “legs”—one, the northward, was very wet, as the seas were meeting her on the starboard bow, but on the run south, with the seas under her port quarter, she was fairly dry.

Information had been received that a schooner out of Sidon was going to “run” a mixed cargo of contraband—a few cases of German rifles, a couple of tons of tobacco, and a consignment of hashish and other drugs. The information had been fairly good, and I was in high hopes of making a capture. The night was excellent for the smugglers. With the offshore wind they would be sure of smooth water close inshore and an absence of surf. They would be able to lie close under the lee of the land, and could easily make the ruins of the ancient Phœnician port of Zib, half-way between St. John of Acre and Ras-el-Nakoura.

The old port was in Abu George's division, and, naturally, he had had to be consulted about the operations that I intended to carry out that night. Some of my coastguards and his mounted police had been detailed to watch the land approaches to the groves around the port and to seize any contraband that was landed, whilst I, in the launch, was to seize the schooner, the remainder of her cargo, and the smuggler gang. I had wanted Abu George to take charge of the shore operations, whilst I commanded the sea party, but to my intense surprise he had declined, and had insisted on accompanying me in the launch.

As we bucked our way northwards, half a mile off the low-lying, rock-girt shore, he was sitting in the stern-sheets with me, evidently enjoying every moment of the trip. Crouched along the thwarts were the figures of my armed coastguardsmen, gripping their rifles and cowering down to dodge the sheets of spindrift that were continually flying over her, as she stuck her clumsy old bows into the short, steep seas. I had expected him to be very seasick, but he appeared to be having the time of his life, as he sat beside me where I was steering, his eyes puckered up, staring ahead into the night for any sign of a light, or the shadow of the schooner's sails showing above the coastline.

We turned at the northern limit of the patrol; *Progress* rolled violently as she fell into the trough, but still Abu George seemed to think the whole trip was a picnic.

"Do you know, Duff," he said, "this is the sort of life I have always wanted to lead and have never had the chance?"

"A fine sailor you'd make," I snorted. "Why, man, you are a soldier right through to your marrow-bones." I was more than a little annoyed at having him in the launch at all. He was very senior to me and I expected that, if we did manage to capture the schooner, he would write a report in which he would collect any kudos that might happen to be going for himself. As a matter of fact he did not do so, but I was not to know that at the time. "You fellows," I continued, "take a sixpenny boat-trip at Brighton and think that you are entitled to sing 'Hearts of Oak' for the rest of your lives."

By this time *Progress* was round, and, with the sea under her quarter, was lying much easier. I spoke down the tube to the engine-room, told the Armenian engineer

to ease down a few revolutions, and then paid more attention to what Abu George was saying.

"It is strange that some youngsters never have much of a chance, isn't it? No home life or affection, I mean. Why, Duff, I have never had anyone who cared a tinker's curse whether I lived or died," and he fell silent.

"Weep on my shoulder if you like," I said. "Or do you want me to break into sympathetic sobs?"

"Hang it all, I am not asking for pity; I'm not feeling sorry for myself," he snorted; "I am merely stating a general proposition. Look what a heartless devil I am nowadays. I am quite sure that I should have been a different sort of man if I had had what any boy is entitled to—a decent home and some affection."

I kept silent, my eyes on the binnacle in front of me, as I quietly took a four-point bearing of the red light on the ruins of the Crusaders' church on the sea-wall of Acre, miles to the south-eastwards.

"I was born in Bath," he said, "in '83. My people were Irish folk from Co. Sligo, but we happened to be on a visit to relations in Bath at the time. We were farmers, and, for some reason, stayed on in England after I was born; but my father broke his neck out hunting when I was only about two years old, and I am afraid that mother had a very thin time of it trying to make ends meet. She was a darned fine woman, as independent as anyone could be, but I am afraid that the presence of a youngster was too much of an encumbrance for her, and, finally, she had to pass me on to relatives."

I listened, surprised. Abu George was notoriously close-mouthed, a man of iron where his own feelings were concerned, and I knew that he had probably never unburdened himself, to the extent that he was now doing,

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to anyone in Palestine. The Arab coastguardsman in the bows sang out suddenly that he could see a vessel lying two points off the starboard bow, and I altered course so as to close her. This brought the sea directly astern, and her propeller began to race madly as her counter lifted. In a few minutes I was alongside the vessel and found her to be a schooner bringing donkeys and cattle from Cyprus. Abu George asked to be allowed to board her, and did so with a flying leap as I placed our forecastle alongside the vessel's quarter. Satisfied, we resumed our patrol. He started again :

“ I had the hell of a life as a kid, Duff. I was passed along from one relative to another ; none of them wanted to be bothered with me, and they made no pretence of liking me. I was pushed about, from one to another, in Gloucestershire, Somerset, Staffordshire and Monmouth, until I was just about as tough and embittered a little brat as you could find within the seven seas of Britain. I landed up, finally, with an old maiden aunt, a woman in comfortable circumstances, in Bristol. She sent me to the Merchant Venturers' School—I was there from 1893 to 1898, and I think that those were the happiest years of my life—and the memory of those years is the main reason for me being here in this confounded old rattletrap of a launch of yours to-night.

“ I used to spend my spare time wandering about the quays of Bristol, trying to learn all about sailing-ships and the lore of the sea. I think that I had the love of the sea absolutely fixed in my heart. Did me a lot of good, too, in another way, for I used to spend hours in the fo'c'sles of German and French windjammers, and I improved my school languages out of all proportion to that of the other boys. I revelled in the strange tales the

sailormen used to tell me. I considered a blue-water man was the finest creation of the Lord, and I longed, with a fierceness that I cannot describe, to be as they were.

"Everything to do with the world beyond the horizon of the Bristol Channel was of the most enthralling interest to me. I knew so many of the ship men; I saved up the foreign stamps on the letters that many of them sent me, and I always used to be down at the quays when one of the tall ships I knew was expected."

He fell silent a moment, and as he looked keenly around the horizon I felt bound to say something.

"You ought to have lived in the days of the Cabots, or else gone a-roving with Grenville or Blake."

"I am afraid it is hard to believe in reincarnation," rejoined Abu George; "but I often think that I must have sailed from Bristol port in Gloriana's days, or, under the Commonwealth, with Blake to the Mediterranean or against the Dutch.

"I must have been a confounded nuisance to that old aunt of mine, for I was always wandering the countryside of South Bristol, searching hedgerows, raiding orchards and getting caught by kind-hearted police constables. I had my first fight on Brandon Hill, under the Cabot Memorial. The other lads made a ring of coats and the enemy was a chap a bit bigger than myself. It went to about twenty one-minute rounds. Time was kept by a burly youth, the only one who owned a watch, and I received a terrific lacing. I remember well, I was licked to the wide in the ninth round, but I went on scrapping until I was really knocked out in the twentieth. What a job I had to explain my injuries when I got back to the maiden aunt! I think she was really believing me when I said that I had bent down to pick up a little black

kitten from the path of a runaway horse and van, until a neighbour called and asked her if she had heard about the tremendous fight between two Merchant Venturer boys on Brandon Hill.

"Then the inevitable and usual thing happened. She would not punish me herself, but called in her doctor, who always charged her for a visit on these occasions, and got him to give me the father and mother of a hiding. He was an old Irishman by the name of McQuade, and, believe me, his usual bedside manner was entirely lacking when he was called in to attend to me. I can remember the old chap as though it were yesterday, frock-coat, topper and all the usual paraphernalia of the proverbial medical man.

"Punishments were pretty steep in school as well. There was one master, a fine chap—Professor Julius Wertheim, I think his name was; anyway, we used to call him 'Judy'—a tiny figure of a man, but he was an expert with a cane. Others like Munro, Curthoys and Tingle, also believed in the cane, but they were fonder of whacking out hundreds and hundreds of lines."

"There's some of your confounded men showing a light ashore," I broke in, as I caught a momentary flash of light on the beach. As it flared again, Abu George also saw it. At this stage of the patrol we were not more than three hundred yards from the beach.

"It's that confounded Arab officer, Mustafa Effendi," he growled. "It is obviously someone lighting a pipe, and he is the only man of that bunch who smokes one. Nasty bit of work, only smokes a pipe to ape Englishmen, not because he likes it. Wait until I get hold of him to-morrow."

"Hold on!" I said, and passed the word aft. "I am going to go about again, and we will make another run

northwards. We will stand out to sea a bit, so that there will be less chance of our exhaust being heard. When we get north of Zib, I am going to stop the engines and drift down with wind and sea. Perhaps we shall drop in upon them."

As soon as *Progress* had steadied on her new course, and we had increased speed to counteract the wind, Abu George started afresh on his reminiscences.

"Cricket and rugger were pretty good in those days. We belonged to the Knowle Club, which had such chaps as Wallace Jarman, a rugger international, who played for Bristol, and was also a well-known cricketer; Walter Hale, who played cricket and rugger for Somerset and Gloucestershire. There were also Arthur Banen and his brother, Tom, who is now the secretary of the Bristol R.F.C. I was the first vice-captain, and one of the founder members of the Knowle Hockey Club, which still flourishes.

"The time came along when I was to leave school. I had a great hunger to go to sea, and the maiden aunt had almost decided to let me go, in fact my indentures were actually being drawn up, when news came through that a very close friend, a lad named Frank Aplin, had been washed overboard and drowned on his first voyage. That finished the sea in so far as the aunt was concerned. Instead she took me down to the establishment of a Professor Short in the Arcade, Bristol, a phrenologist, and paid five bob to have my 'bumps' read as some guide to what profession I should follow. As a result, I was placed in a lawyer's office up amongst the tiles, where I sat in the most wretched misery, counting sparrows and wishing to goodness I was dead. I never could stand lawyers. Gosh! Look, man, there she is," and he grabbed his

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night-glasses. I levelled mine and looked also. Close under the land I made out the loom of the sails of a schooner, standing slowly along the shore, bound northwards.

Immediately everything was activity. Abu George sprang to the top of the hatch, and rapidly cast off the canvas jacket that had been protecting the Vickers' gun from the flying sea-water, his fingers fumbling with the stiff boat-lacing in his eagerness to prepare the weapon ; two of the coastguardsmen broached an ammunition box and helped him feed one end of the belt into the weapon. The remainder tore the canvas wrappers off their rifle-bolts and took up their action stations along the rail, whilst I shouted down the speaking-tube for full speed and put the helm hard down as I altered course. This brought the sea dead ahead, and as the old vessel punched her nose into it, she shook and rattled with the vibration of her racing propeller.

I called to Abu George : " Are you taking charge of this operation ? You are the senior, and entitled to do so if you think fit."

" No, you carry on, old man ; count me as one of your crew. I'll take charge of your gun for you," he answered.

By this time we were rapidly closing the schooner, and I had just begun to feel certain of her, when I saw that she was setting every sail that she possessed and had altered course to south-west, bringing the wind astern, and giving her the best chance of escaping. I fired two Verey lights as a signal to the shore party, and then altered course to intercept her, but she was travelling much faster than I calculated, and came rushing down upon us.

" Gad, she is going to try ramming ! " roared Abu George, and it seemed that that was her intention.

"Let her have a 'burst' from your gun," I shouted, and the devil's tattoo from the machine-gun momentarily silenced the noise of the wind and sea. Still the schooner came roaring towards us, but some of the bullets must have raked her deck for, at the last moment, she luffed and shot past our stern. She was not five feet from us as she passed, and the Greek coastguardsman in our bows hove a small grapnel, getting home on her rail. Her momentum and dead weight almost capsized us as we spun round in her wake, but our drag brought her up all standing with sails thundering in the stiff breeze. One of her crew ran aft, evidently to cut the line, but Abu George swung his gun and fired a short burst over his head, which drove the man back into the cover of a small deck-house. In a few minutes we were aboard, and had taken charge. She carried a crew of eleven (peaceful vessels of equivalent size on this coast never have more than four), and we were delighted when we took her in tow, with her crew handcuffed in her cabin, and started for the port of Acre.

On the way back I asked Abu George how long he had remained in Bristol after he had entered the lawyer's office.

"Oh, for some time—nearly two years in all. But, it was in 1900, I believe, that the maiden aunt surprised everyone by getting married to a very estimable Plymouth Brother, and the first thing he did, when he got control, was to kick me out of the house and place me in lodgings."

We were not quite so delighted the next day when we examined our prize, found that she bore no trace of contraband and that her papers were in order. Still less were we pleased when we discovered that the vessel had been used by the smugglers to deceive us. Whilst we were chasing her they ran their cargo in another vessel and got

it safely away. The *reis* (skipper) denied that he had made any attempt to run us down, stating that he had been scared by our firing; his large crew, all of whom were armed, he said, were passengers and, anyway, there was no law in Syria at that time forbidding persons to carry arms.

Some months passed before I had any further personal contact with Abu George. It was not until I was posted temporarily to Acre in order to take measures against the smugglers that I really had much opportunity to have a further yarn with him. Just before going to Acre I had been on ten days' leave to Cairo, and whilst there I had been inveigled by a silver-tongued barber, who convinced me that I was going bald, despite the fact that I was but three-and-twenty at the time, into paying two guineas for a bottle of hair-tonic. This was a reddish, thin liquid in a half-litre bottle. At the same time I had been smitten with a sense of shame regarding my huge bulk and had sent home for a bottle of a certain widely advertised fat reducer, which was exactly similar, in colour and consistency, to the hair-tonic.

Abu George had fixed up quarters for me in the Keep, and I was delighted to have my bed in the vast hall on the upper story of the Crusaders' tower, with its deep embrasures in the twenty-five-foot-thick walls. At the bottom of the staircase leading to the battlements was a large slab bearing the double-branched cross of the Crusading patriarch, placed in its present position by the Saracens so that it might be defiled by every passing foot.

One evening Abu George came up to see me, in order to discuss the plans I was making for the capture of the smugglers and their contraband. I detailed them briefly to him and asked his advice.

"It all seems to turn upon this informer of yours, Duff. If he is reliable then things should go well. What do you know about him?" he asked.

"Not very much, I am afraid," I replied. "After all, we have to work with very rotten instruments. You know as well as I do that informers are generally pretty snaky. There are precious few of them that help the police out of a heartfelt desire to assist the policy of law and order. The only thing that I have been able to discover about him would only damn him the further in your eyes. He is a deserter from the Palestine Gendarmerie, and part of his price is that he shall receive a free pardon for his desertion."

I looked up at the tanned, weather-beaten face of Abu George and was surprised to see a grin spreading slowly over it.

"So you think that a deserter can never be any good, do you, Duff?" he asked.

"Well, don't you?" I countered.

"My dear chap, I was once a deserter myself," he replied. "I deserted from the Royal Artillery in the old days before the war. Oh, you needn't worry," he continued, "I took advantage of the pardon granted to all such who rejoined on the outbreak of our late lamented scrap with Germany, and so got things put ship-shape."

I asked him how he had come to join the Army when he had a good job in a lawyer's office. He sat thoughtfully on the end of my camp-bed and told me the following story:

"After my aunt married, I am afraid that I was so intoxicated by the new freedom I found in lodgings that I ran absolutely wild and began drinking a lot more than

## FAREWELL TO BRISTOL

was good for me. I am not trying to introduce any 'sob stuff,' but I think that I was a lad with a grievance against the whole world. No one had ever cared very much for me and I had never known what it was to be loved by anyone, so I am afraid that there was more than a trace of bitterness in all I did.

"Anyway, I finished up by getting horribly drunk and falling into the lake at Bristol Zoo, from which I was pulled out and attended to by a friendly lass. That unsettled me further, for she was a decent soul, straight as a die, and when she found out what sort of a fool I was making of myself, she let me have it good and strong. One day after she had tried to pull me straight, I saw a smart recruiting-sergeant in Victoria Street, Bristol, and joined the Army. Before I knew where I was I found myself in the gunners, and sent to Ireland for training.

"You know, Duff, anyway by hearsay, what life was like in the ranks in those days. Lots of fights, plenty of spreeds. I was a darned good soldier one week and in the cells the next. Guess I was just a young pup, full of my own importance. Anyway, I got a lot of knowledge out of my service, received a number of hidings, which did me good, and laid the foundations of this 'cauliflower' ear of mine. That ear has stood me in good stead since, on many occasions. Pugnacious people who wished to pick a row with me have suddenly caught sight of it, and set me down as having been a professional 'pug,' thereupon thinking again before they started any trouble.

"To complete this rather miserable tale, I vanished, without warning, from my place in the battery, some time in 1903, and quietly faded back into civilian life. Don't think that I am proud of that particular portion of my life; I most certainly am not."

"What happened when you got back to civilian life?" I asked.

"One job after another. I travelled all over England, Scotland and Wales in the years between 1903 and the outbreak of war, but I avoided Ireland, and probable arrest for desertion, like the plague. I was a shorthand writer, estimating clerk in a structural steel works, draughtsman, commercial traveller, secretary to a Parliamentary candidate, and I was employed as confidential secretary for many months in a well-known Ducal household, the name of which I will keep secret. The whole time I did myself very well as far as sport was concerned, and I think that I had really begun to find my manhood. I was not a teetotaller by any means, but I had got rid of the silly idea that it was manly to get drunk.

"I played a lot of rugger in Newport; in fact I once played in the First XV against Exeter. I remember the match ended in a draw of 8 points, one goal and one try each. You won't know them, young fellow, but we had some darned fine men in the Newport team in those days; people like George Boots, Hodges, Charlie Pritchard, Dan Boots, Dowell, and two fellows who lodged with me, Phil Waller and Melville Baker. The whole lot, besides Tommy Vile, Harry Rowlands, R. B. Griffiths and Stanley Williams, were internationals later on, and are names in rugger that one can conjure with."

I am afraid that I looked blankly at him, for few of the names meant anything to me, reared in a later generation. But Abu George appeared to be lost in the deeps of reminiscence and went on, calmly, dreamily, looking apparently at the long, dusty ray of sunlight that streamed in through the arrow-slits in the castle wall:

"Then there was 'Doggy' Martin, whose family kept

open house at Maindel, Newport, and his two delightful sisters, Beatrice and Nancy. They were about the first really nice girls I had ever known, always excepting the lass who pulled me out of the Zoo lake. I also played for the Newport Knobblers, a fine XV, sponsored by a great 'rugger' man and enthusiast, Harry Packer. I did a bit of sculling as well. I won my maidens, Junior and Senior, in the Newport Rowing Club. We had some pretty wild nights there.

"Later on I also played for Pill Harries R.F.C. The captain was a Welsh International, George Travers. We had a good many hard games, as we belonged to a Monmouthshire League; the stiffest of all was with Llanelly XV, which ended in a pointless draw."

"I say," I interrupted, "what about these plans for searching that old mill behind your house to-morrow morning?"

"Sorry, old man, sorry," said Abu George, "I do not often speak about those days. This must be about the first time that I have done so. I had no desire to bore you, I am sure."

I felt very contrite, told him that I did not mean to stop his flow of memories, but my Chief Petty Officer of Coastguards was nearly due and I wanted to give him his instructions after talking over the plan of operations with Abu George.

The raid passed off well; we not only captured a great deal of contraband tobacco, but also seized a large number of arms destined for the malcontents in Jerusalem.

The following day, when I was taking leave of Abu George in his office, before returning to my station at Haifa, he offered to walk down through the narrow streets of the ancient fortress city to the steps of the *Gumruk*,

the Customs quay, in the old port that had seen the vessels of Cleopatra and the great cogs of the Crusaders nestling against its wharves.

"By the way, Duff, do you find that that fat-reducing medicine of yours is doing you any good?"

"Well, I have only had one bottle," I replied, "and I have had no chance to weigh myself here in Acre, but I must say I feel better for it."

"You really feel lighter and fitter, do you?" he asked.

I thought that he contemplated taking something of the same sort himself, and I waxed voluble in my praise of the mixture.

"What was the name of that barber who sold you that hair-raiser in Cairo?" he asked. "I am getting a bit thin on the top myself."

I told him and then clambered aboard my launch, after again bidding him "Good-bye," gave the order for "slow ahead," and headed her up for the narrow entrance at the foot of the Tower of Flies on the end of the ruined mole. The Petty Officer caught my sleeve and told me that Abu George was signalling me to stop. I did so, thinking that he might have something important to say to me.

"Duff," he shouted, "how you manage to get away with your jobs I'm hanged if I know. Anyhow, I must have done you some good. I changed the two mixtures over, seeing that they were the same colour. You ought to have considerably less fat on top of that head of yours now, but I hope that the hair-raiser doesn't cause you to grow a crop of the finest wool in your tummy. Cheer-io."

A good job for Abu George that the Vickers' gun was secured for sea and had its lashings and canvas jacket in place.

## CHAPTER THREE

## WAR DAYS OF ABU GEORGE

ONE day, when I found myself alone with Abu George, I think it was on an occasion when some of my men had been sent to him to reinforce his mounted patrols in a search for a very badly "wanted" minor sheikh of the Aramshe Bedouins, the ever-green subject of the War days came under discussion. I had often wondered for what particular exploit he had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, whose ribbon shone on his breast. Riding from one village to the next, and in the long halts between, whilst scores of suspects were brought to the different rendezvous by his questing troopers, I heard the following tale from him.

"I was at Hampton-in-Arden, Warwickshire, playing golf, when War was declared, and, reading the amnesty promised to all deserters who rejoined the colours, I immediately went back to the Royal Field Artillery, and I was sent straight to France with the 4th Division; but after the usual active service, with the same experiences as thousands of others, I was declared unfit medically for further service in March, 1915."

I am afraid that I looked my disbelief. He was such a tremendous, burly figure of a man. He laughed as he caught my eye.

"Absolutely true, Duff, I assure you. I have still got

my discharge certificate at home in Acre, and I will show it to you if you like."

I naturally refused to have any such proof produced, and he resumed :

"I was not back to 'civvy' life for many days, when I decided to try and rejoin. I happened to be visiting an old pal of mine, who was serving in the Essex Yeomanry, a chap called George Chambers, and as I was in Ilford, a place where I was entirely unknown, I went to the Recruiting offices and was accepted. They tried hard to get me into the infantry, but I stuck out, and was posted to my old love, the Gunners. I was sent along to Brookhill Barracks and, in due course, to a recruits' depot at Woolwich.

"At my first appearance on foot drill parade, I found to my dismay that a Sergeant Willington was in charge. I had served, years before, in the same battery with him. He recognized me and told me to clear out as I probably knew more about the drill than he did himself. He sent for me afterwards, and was going to report me for having rejoined as having no previous service, but when he heard my tale, and I produced my week-old certificate of discharge on medical grounds, overlooked the affair and wished me good luck. A couple of weeks later I was promoted bombardier and posted to the Deptford Gun Brigade, which later became the 39th Divisional Artillery. The Adjutant of my brigade, the 174th Bde. R.F.A., Lieutenant P. H. Rowe, a fine type of ranker officer, helped me along, and it was not long before I was made sergeant and transferred to Tweezledown, Aldershot.

"I forgot to mention that whilst I was at Deptford, I was billeted at a private house in Greenwich, with an estimable lady called Ginks. She could have stepped

directly out of one of Belcher's cartoons. Her appearance, her love of the cup that cheers, and the high tone of indignation she affected when, one night, I brought back her henpecked spouse somewhat the worse for wear, all fitted her for a Belcher model. Most of her time was spent in comparing her lot with her present spouse, her second, with the happy days she had spent with her first, all to the detriment of the shuddering, chinless, walrus-moustached little man who cowered before her. The picture of the dear departed, life-size, glowered beerily down upon us from a commanding position high on the wall, set across a corner."

Abu George settled himself down in his stirrups. We were on the dangerous tracks below the ruins of the Crusading castle of Montfort, in the high hills of Upper Galilee at the moment, and from the depths of his huge body came deep rumblings and chuckles of reminiscent mirth.

"She had three birthdays, all fittingly celebrated and duly repented, during the brief period of my stay, and my promotion to sergeant gave her the excuse for a really heroic celebration. She threw her arms about me shouting, 'Soldiers—soldiers, I love 'em ; but sergeants—ah ! I adore them.' Poor little hubby reached the spot at which the worm turns and got annoyed, but she slowly, quietly, and very efficiently, grabbed him, and held the sobbing little man down over her capacious lap and applied her slipper until he had cried himself almost into unconsciousness.

"The diet was bloaters. Bloaters—morning, noon and night, with the result that I was always thirsty. However, despite her winning little ways, she was a good sort, and, when my time to go arrived, she fell upon my neck

and wept copiously, refusing to keep my billeting money. I refused to accept it, but, hours later, I found a little packet in my pocket with the whole lot inside.

"At Deptford we had an amusing and trying time, breaking in some of the finest men material I have ever encountered. East Enders, lightermen, water-side workers, costers, shop assistants and every other trade and profession known to London's East End. My own batman, a lad called Blakeman, had been a newspaper-boy, and I have never met a cheerier or more optimistic soul in my life. To many of them horses were complete strangers, still they tackled the job with a right good will. I remember two of the drivers being ordered to clean up a double set of wheel-harness, and they decided that it was better in every way to treat the steelwork with aluminium paint, rather than to burnish it. The major saw it next day on inspection—he was a regular with a lot of Indian service—you can imagine the scene!

"After Tweezledown we were sent to Milford, where, upon arrival, it was discovered that we had brought the whole of the camp cooking-utensils with us; the consternation of the incoming brigade at finding they could not cook a meal must have been fierce. It did me a bit of good, though, as I was promoted quartermaster-sergeant, and the following week reached warrant-rank as battery sergeant-major.

"Finally we got to France and I was there until well on in 1917. During that time I was slightly gassed, and was wounded in the arm and hand, but Passchendaele got me low finally, and I was admitted to hospital for an operation. Oh, yes," in answer to my question, he replied, "I got the D.C.M. during that time. I am not going to say anything about what I got it for. It's not false

modesty, but do you, or anyone else worth his salt, go talking about decorations? If you care to find out, it is in the *London Gazette* for July 9th, 1917.

"About the Base Camp at Havre, the least said the better. I was attached to No. 13 Camp Mess, some of the fellows were good, ready to help the passer-by, but most of them resented the arrival of each fresh man, scared that they might be sent away from their 'cushy' jobs and packed off up the line. One gentleman I remember well, he did a roaring trade in arranging for individuals who were medically boarded and awarded TU. or TB. (meaning 'Temporarily Unfit' or 'Temporary Base') to become PU. or PB. ('Permanently'). It was simple enough, the magic letters were printed in block capitals, and he had only to make a curved stroke on the capital 'T.'

"One old R.S.M. reached Havre for dental treatment and, upon 'falling in' with his Camp Troop, heard the order given, 'Horse Artillery to the front,' and remarked loudly, 'And about ——— time, too!' His return to the line was expedited. The Provost Sergeant was the subject of many rumours: it was said that he had once been found tied to the railway-lines.

"In November, '17, I found myself, with one officer and twelve gunners, attached to the 23rd Division, and we were put on a train at Havre without the slightest idea of where we were bound, and, after several days, found ourselves in Italy. This little bunch of artillery-men were the first arrivals in what afterwards became Arquata Base Camp. We were there for six days and by incessant 'scrounging' managed to make ourselves fairly comfortable, our hardest task was to get our boots sufficiently thawed to draw them on in the morning. Bitter, biting cold, enough to freeze the hind-leg off a brass monkey.

At last one officer and myself were ordered to move forward, and away we went. Strangely enough in the train I met a man named Davies, nicknamed 'Dakka,' whom I had known, years before, in Newport, Monmouthshire, when he had been representing the Wolverhampton firm of Manders, and had a yarn over old times.

"Finally we reached Istrana, which was railhead at the time. The officer was immediately fixed up with quarters, but I had to rustle round and find a place for myself. I finally 'wished' myself on a sergeant-major of the R.A.S.C., who grudgingly agreed to put me up. He was a dour individual, and read me a long lecture on the virtues of total abstinence when I grew voluble on the uses of rum as an aid to keeping some warmth in a frozen body. My bed was made up in a ramshackle shed, on top of some cases. I crept between blankets that had been wet and had then frozen solid, thinking the unkindest thoughts about the S.M. There were no lights, they were too scared of Austrian air-raids, and I had to get up several times and run around the hut to get my circulation moving. In the morning, when I had a chance to look around I examined my bed—I had been 'sleeping' on cases of rum!!

"It took us another three days to get up to our objective, and then I fell in with the best man I met during the War, a Captain Smith-Carington, and I remained as his sergeant-major until Armistice Day. We did the usual scrapping that all gunners had on the Italian front, and, after Armistice, the unit was billeted at Malo. Our billets were arranged prior to arrival and I found myself in the house of the local shoemaker."

He broke off his tale as a corporal galloped back along the path to tell us that the man we wanted was hiding in

a small ruin, a place that had been an outpost of the Crusaders in the days when Castle Montfort had been the guardian of the northern passes into the principality of Acre when the Latin Kingdom of Outremer was tottering to its fall, when all that remained was St. John of Acre and its immediate hinterland, guarded by a ring of fortresses held by the Knights of the three great Orders. Abu George, calling on me to follow him, immediately shook his horse into a fast trot, and our whole cavalcade thundered along the narrow, rocky path until we sighted the ruins of the small tower across a shallow valley. As we did so there came a smattering of rifle-fire from the crumbling battlements and we immediately sought shelter amongst the tumbled boulders of the mountain-side.

Abu George's great voice boomed out :

"*Sellim nafhsakh, ya Sheikh Abdel Khadr.* Surrender yourself, Sheikh Abdel Khadr, it is useless to resist us. Your retreat is cut off by patrols behind you. You know me, and you know what will happen to you and yours if you as much as scratch one of my men. Surrender !"

Abdel Khadr's reply was unprintable, but before another shot was fired, two young Arabs jumped into view in an embrasure.

"We will surrender to you, Abu George, if you will give us your right hand."

He called back that he would give them his right hand, meaning thereby, that they should not be killed by the police, if they would bring out their sheikh with them and submit to arrest. We could hear a fierce quarrel going on within the walls, followed by bitter cursing and reviling and then the two young men appeared, driving their sheikh in front of them at the rifle muzzles. Abu George, pistol in hand, stepped from behind a boulder, and told

them to throw down their weapons. As they did so, Abdel Khadr, made a wild spring down the mountain-side and would, probably, have got clear away amongst the confused mass of rocks and boulders had not Abu George coolly, quietly, and scientifically, shot him through the right thigh at over sixty yards' range, bringing the brigand tumbling to the ground, where he rolled with his own momentum for another few paces, ere he came to rest behind a rock.

I sprang up to run towards the fallen man, but Abu George bellowed :

"Get down, you damned young fool, get down ! Wounded wolves always bite the hardest," and he dived for cover himself, as several pistol bullets hummed around him, fired by the grim old Bedouin from his hiding-place.

I crawled between the rocks to Abu George, as I was afraid that he might have been hit by one of the flying bullets, but I found him quite uninjured, covering the two remaining Arabs with his pistol. They were cowering on the ground, protesting that the incident was none of their fault.

"Slip your handcuffs on to these two beauties, Duff," he growled, "and search them to see if they have any weapons." I removed a couple of wicked, curved Druze daggers from their waist-belts, and discovered a small, nine-chambered revolver of French make in the breast of one's *dermiya*, the long shirt-like garment that covered him from neck to ankles. I must have incautiously exposed my head during this operation, for another swarm of pistol bullets hummed over my helmet. I was furious and drew my revolver to have a shot at the old brigand. Abu George caught me by the arm.

"Don't get excited, young fellow. I've hit old Abdel

## M A R R I A G E

Khadr hard, and loss of blood will soon make him surrender. No sense in your getting killed for the dear Palestine Government. We'll have him soon enough."

It was true. Within half an hour all signs of resistance had gone, and we cautiously advanced and found the man unconscious from the amount of blood he had lost. I then saw another side of Abu George: almost lovingly he tended his prisoner's wounds, and was as careful of his comfort on the long road back to Acre as if the man had been his brother. I knew that he had married his wife, a bonny, strapping Italian girl whilst he was in the Army in that country, so I gradually led the conversation back to his early experiences.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I met my wife whilst I was serving in Italy. I am not a romantic sort of chap, but I fell madly in love with her the very first time that I saw her. She was the daughter of the shoemaker upon whom I was billeted in the little town of Malo. Her parents were bitterly opposed to our marriage, but the girl was willing, that was all that mattered to me, and married we were despite all the trouble that the old people caused. Smith-Carington and a couple of pals stood stoutly by me. My wedding-day, in March, 1919, was uneventful enough, except that I was in such a 'flat spin' that I got mixed up at breakfast between the sugar and the salt, used the latter in my coffee and, in my desperation, drank the nauseating mixture, with the result that I felt darned ill during the nuptial Mass.

"I had a month of married bliss, and then received forty-eight hours' notice to proceed to Taranto *en route* for Egypt, and stayed there until 1920. I was in charge of the 54th Divisional Ammunition Column, a unit with Indian drivers and about 50 British gunners. Fine chaps those

Indians, the Havildar-Major was a man called Daulat Ram, he is now a commissioned officer in India, one of the whitest men I have ever met. A good loyal crowd they were, only once did I have any trouble with them. You will remember how disgruntled most soldiers were just after the War, and it was through a fancied grievance the Hindus had against their Jemadar, who happened to be a Moslem.

"The men paraded and asked for an independent interpreter, and, when an I.M.S. doctor appeared, said that they were dissatisfied with him. I dismissed them off parade, whereupon they immediately 'fell in' again. I again dismissed them and they again 'fell in.' I decided that the best thing to do was to collect four sergeants and detail them for fifteen minutes' duty each. The game went merrily on, 'Dismiss,' 'Fall in.' 'Dismiss,' 'Fall in.' Again the sergeant dismissed them, again they voluntarily 'fell in,' and so on for an hour or more, after which they began to laugh and we heard no more of their complaints. I know that they often discussed the incident, in fact that they rather boasted to men of other units of how their own sergeant-major had outwitted them. They appeared to be very proud of the yarn.

"Things were bad in Egypt in those days. Rebellions, riots, strikes and murders of Europeans were a daily occurrence. We were 'standing-to' the whole time and continually dealing with mobs in the narrow streets. The Egyptians took to throwing vitriol at us, and dropping paving-stones from the roofs as we passed down the lanes. Fridays were their favourite days for demonstrations, when they came out of the Mosques after midday prayers. The same old stunt that we have so much of in this Palestine of ours, except that the Egyptians had more

## REVOLT IN EGYPT

'guts' than have our city-bred Arabs. They would tear up the paving-stones and erect barricades that we had to storm, and then collect all the able-bodied inhabitants and stand over them whilst they relaid the streets. We gunners were used as mounted infantry, and had it not been for the armoured-cars, I guess that I should not have been torturing this poor old nag of mine in riding all over these confounded hills.

"I managed to 'wangle' a leave to Italy to see my wife, late in 1919. On the way back I was forced to spend about fourteen days in camp at Marseilles, a trying experience anywhere when you have no duties to perform and a job to which to return. However, one day I received marching orders, and was detailed to take charge of a party of soldiers proceeding to Egypt in the s.s. *Huaneraco*. We went aboard and settled ourselves in, only to be kicked off again in order to accommodate a number of men, women and children—refugees of some sort or another, being repatriated to Palestine and Egypt.

"Getting left behind in Marseilles did not suit my book at all, so I addressed myself to a ship's officer and asked his advice. He was sympathetic and referred me to the Embarkation Officer, saying that if he agreed to my going he would find place for me somewhere aboard. I went to the E.O., saluted him, and pretended to be even more stupid than I actually am.

"'Please, sir,' I bleated, 'please would you care very much if I went to Egypt?'

"'I don't care if you go to hell,' snapped the harassed officer, 'so long as you get out of my sight.'

"Back to the ship, where I told the ship's officer that the E.O. had no objection to my embarking. He was a decent sort and sent me along to the Purser, a man called

Wells, so far as I remember. He was more than human, he fixed me up with a berth astern and allowed me to feed in his cabin. I called up the corporal of my party, handed over the necessary papers to him, and told him to march the men back to camp. I hauled my kit-bag aboard and was off for Egypt.

“Queer crowd, those refugees. I have never seen a queerer. They were all well dressed in European garb, but as soon as the coast-line of Alexandria was under the rail, Eastern garments appeared and their Western kit disappeared until they could get hold of some old-clothes dealer ashore. Their subservient attitude of deep respect and gratitude for all they had received during their time of exile disappeared with their trousers, and they rapidly became truculent and nasty.

“I was bitten by an officer’s pet monkey whilst I was at Sidi Bish camp, was rushed to the military hospital, and told to drink plenty of whisky, the only treatment received. I was ordered not to report back, but if, in ten days or so, I started to climb trees or attempted to swing by my tail, I should know that I was in a bad way. I carefully and faithfully followed the treatment with most disastrous results, began to see monkeys long before the time was up. I remember them well, one had purple spots and a pink tail, the others were covered in an assortment of purple, yellow and blue stripes.

“When I actually discarded the uniform I felt sad, sadder than I cared to admit. Everything seemed strange—the old routine gone—old associations broken. I took two dogs with me. One you know, old ‘Jock,’ the Aberdeen, he is still with me at Acre, the only dog who will dive six feet for a stone. Upon leaving the Army I took a job as a cashier in a hotel, and, later on, was Chief

## DEMobilization

Collector for the Egyptian Markets Company. An unpleasant and poorly paid job, going around the native villages collecting the tolls and dues and then taking them on to Zagazig, which I soon left to take up a job as French and Italian shorthand secretary to the Palestine Government. I arrived in Jerusalem in December, 1920, on the very day that Edwin Samuel, the High Commissioner's son, was married.

"I was first attached to an old Naval officer called Smallwood, a survivor of the *Victoria*, when she was rammed by the *Camperdown*, and I had many little jobs of importance, such as the framing of the report to the Home Government following a conference in Cairo and Jerusalem in 1921. Winston Churchill, Colonel Lawrence and many of the people interested in Near Eastern affairs were in the conference, and I was most interested in all I had to do as secretary.

"The report was a highly important and most confidential document and I had to type the whole thing out myself. I had practically finished it, and had it laid out on a large table when I was called away for a moment. On my return I found one page and all its copies were missing. My hair nearly went grey as the missing page was the most important and secret of the whole lot. I remembered having seen an Arab clerk rushing down the stairs as I returned and I went after his body. Got the little worm, as well as the missing page. The worst of it was that, as I finished with him in my office, which was in Government House, I picked him up and flung him through the door, straight into the face of Lady Samuel, the H.C.'s lady, who was just emerging from the private apartments, which were adjacent. Took a lot of explanation before I was forgiven."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ABU GEORGE STARTS IN OUTREMER

AND now, having brought this tale of a man's life to the point where I can speak from my own observations of what he did, and the situations he had to meet, there is no longer the need to draw upon what he told me of his previous life. Suffice it to say that he brought his wife from her little home in northern Italy, and settled down to the normal life of the men who are performing the functions their Crusading ancestors carried out when their conquest of the Holy Land of Outremer was completed. Like any soldier of the armies of Holy Rood that elected to stay and help Godfrey of Bouillon, Tancred, Baldwin and a host of others to consolidate the land they had so dearly bought, Abu George remained, for, like them, he had precious little to which to return in the land below the north-western horizon, and set himself as best he was able to make the newly won Holy Land into a safe and prosperous country.

Not at once did he find his way among the ranks of the fighting men, who, wearing the drab khaki of the Palestine Police or the Gendarmerie, were charged with the same task and faced with the identical risk that the mail-clad men, who, eight centuries before, had worn the Red Cross on their surcoats, had also encountered. For more than a year he was engaged in the humdrum routine of the

average civilian official in Jerusalem, but even whilst so employed, he had one task of enthralling interest, for he acted as secretary to the Commission of Inquiry that sat after the bloody massacres of the Jews in 1921. This Commission was composed of perhaps the finest and most far-seeing men in the Government service. Sir Thomas Haycraft, the Chief Justice, was at its head, whilst the members were Sir Harry Luke, and J. W. Stubbs, the Director of the Lands Department, whilst they were assisted by three assessors, Aref Pasha el Dajani, a Moslem, and hereditary chieftain of the princely Daoudi clan, Elias Effendi Musnabek, a local Christian, and Dr. Eliash, a Jewish doctor of great tact and understanding.

Sir Thomas Haycraft was a stately gentleman, typically a judicial figure, of long Colonial experience. He was utterly fearless in discharging his duty, and very jealous as to the dignity and, incidentally, the character and interests of all serving under him. At times he sat listening to the evidence with his eyes closed, to all appearances as though he were dozing, but this was far from the case—there was no more alert person in his court-room than he.

Sir Harry Luke, at that time Mr. H. C. Luke, was the complete antithesis, in appearance, to his chief. Polished, suave, of great literary and linguistic ability, he knew his Near East as well as any man living, and always gave the impression of keen and vivid interest in all that transpired during the inquiry. When the commission was sitting at Jaffa, he almost lost his life by drowning whilst bathing, and only prolonged artificial respiration restored him to life.

Stubbs was a complete foil to his two comrades, an Australian of Australians, completely unpolished, practical, bluff, full of shrewd common sense and a passion for

getting to the root of matters ; he believed in calling a spade a spade, and, democratic to the backbone, feared no one when he was expressing an opinion which he had reached after long and careful deliberation.

With three such Commissioners, knowing their Palestine and the ramifications of its political life to the very core, it is not surprising to know that this Commission was one of the most far-reaching and impartial that has ever sat in the Holy Land to inquire into the many bloody outbreaks.

The assessors were the best that could have been found, and could be trusted to guard jealously the interests of their different communities. Aref Pasha el Dajani was an Arab gentleman of the old school, with a polish acquired by many years of intimate contact with the Imperial Court in Constantinople, and with a knowledge of the inner workings of the official mind only to be acquired in that brilliant and most corrupt school. He was a colourful personality, and had been a very high Turkish official in the days before the broad cross of St. George had been again unfurled to the baking Eastern sun, on the walls and bastions of Outremer. He was corpulent and had a keen sense of humour, his greatest rancour being reserved for anyone who spoiled the bliss of his after-luncheon nap, whilst his one anxiety appeared to lie in the amount of the allowances he could claim for his expenses.

The Christian assessor was a man of quite another kidney. He was a member of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and, like many of his people, appeared plebeian when sitting beside the stately old Pasha. But he was shrewd enough, very much the type of a successful tradesman in an English country town. He had been engaged

## COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY

for years in dealing with the tourist traffic and this had given him some degree of superficial confidence in dealing with the new officials of the conquering régime. He was extremely useful, for no man in Palestine knew his own people better. He was deferential to the Pasha, and silkily polite to the Jewish member, but, despite the age-old hatred between the followers of Cross and Crescent, he was utterly at one with the old Pasha in his intense dislike of all things Jewish, and in extreme and distant politeness to individuals of that race.

Dr. Eliash, a Jerusalem lawyer, was a very engaging personality and easily the cleverest of the three assessors. He was astute enough to make most of his points without disturbing the surface good relationship with his fellow-members.

The rest of the commission was composed of Abu George as secretary, and a cross-eyed ex-chauffeur, a native Christian, as interpreter, a task in which he was at times assisted by the gorgeously uniformed, sword-bedight *kawass* of the Chief Justice, the ceremonial life-guard attached to the person of that dignitary.

Things were still very disturbed when the Commission commenced its sittings. At Jaffa they were met by steel-helmeted soldiers and police, striving hard to control a mad crowd of Arabs streaming down to the port, intent on boarding a steamer which was said to have brought some Jewish immigrants. Only after a long examination, verbal and otherwise, of the unfortunate passengers were they allowed to land, the angry hordes appeased, and persuaded to return peacefully to their homes.

The reason for the recent bloodshed was soon discovered. As usual, a number of Arab agitators, all with their own axe to grind, had stirred up the crowds of

ignorant peasants in the surrounding villages, and inflamed the spirits of the hardy, courageous and hot-blooded *bahrieh*, the lightermen and longshoremen of the port. Tension had been extreme for days before the outbreak; at any moment the Jaffa crowds threatened to break into the adjoining township of Tel Aviv, the new Jewish suburb on the sand-dunes to the north of the town. Matters had not been eased by a party of Communists posting up inflammatory placards, and, when matters were at their worst, a young Arab officer of police had led a party of his men on a patrol of the bazaars. There he had either given way to excitement, or had completely lost his head, and some of his men commenced firing wildly.

The rumour ran at once like wild-fire through the low haunts and brothels, along the busy seashore and the bustling wharves and quays, a rumour, fostered and enlarged by the professional trouble-makers, that the Jews were attacking the Arab town in force. Wild stories were afloat that the Jewish corps at Sarafand, a few miles east of the city, had mutinied, and were marching on Jaffa to exterminate the Arabs. From every gutter, hovel and stew, from the port and the narrow lanes, the Arabs swarmed into the principal streets, and an intensive Jew-hunt at once commenced. Many of the Arabs did, undoubtedly, believe that they were in imminent peril, but the great majority of them were the usual scum of a Levantine port, bent entirely upon murder, rape and, above all, loot. The worst of them, the most ferocious, were the *bahrieh*, huge muscular men, accustomed to a life of toil and danger and ripe for any mischief. They were armed, in addition to the usual daggers and crow-bars, with the deadly, sharp cargo-

hooks of their profession, and many were the unfortunate Jews who died in anguish on the sharp points.

But the leaders had overstepped themselves. Their plan and timings were badly co-ordinated, as they always are when the low *effendi* starts plotting a Rising. The Palestinian of the middle classes is absolutely incapable of loyalty to his associates ; knowing themselves only too well, they distrust their comrades. If money or advantage is to be gained by betraying partners, there are very few of them that will not snatch at the opportunity. No rebellion in Palestine can ever lead to anything. Even if the conspirators achieved all their ends, the subsequent squabbles over the spoils will always allow the beaten party time to recuperate and crush their erstwhile conquerors. Faith in each other, comradeship, or loyalty to a bond are things that they do not understand. The lower, more ignorant classes are easily roused to a furious state of murder and desire for battle by the literate class : they have only to appeal to the innate fanaticism of Islam, to tell them that the Faith has been insulted or is in peril at the hands of the Infidels to rouse them. Add to this the fact that most of the farmer and peasant class are in the clutches of the townsman money-lender, who charges as much as 300 per cent. per annum, and it is easily to be seen how these people win over their dupes. The worst feature of all is that the really guilty persons seldom suffer. As soon as they have things in train they discreetly withdraw to their own homes, or even to the Government offices, so that, should the Rising prove abortive, they will easily be able to prove not only their complete innocence, but that they were willing to help the Government in its extremity. It is only the poor devils of peasants and fanatics who have to suffer and

ABU GEORGE STARTS IN OUTREMER  
die, either at the hands of the Forces or, later, upon  
the scaffold.

But, in this case, the Jaffa Rising failed miserably  
to coincide with the arrangements in the outlying  
districts. Some of the other plotters tried desperately  
to keep faith with their rascally leaders, notably the  
Sheikh of the Abu Kish tribe of Bedouin, who launched  
a dangerous attack on the growing Jewish colony of  
Petach Tikvah, only to be gallantly repulsed by the  
settlers. In many smaller hamlets, and in isolated farms,  
as well as in the streets of Jaffa, the Jews were slaughtered  
in dozens, and they died in the most terrible fashion.

When the Commission commenced its visitations to  
the surrounding Arab villages in order to gather evidence  
on the spot, all the *mukhatir* (i.e. the village headmen,  
who have the status of a quasi-Government official to  
reinforce their dignity) were produced by a local English-  
speaking Moslem *effendi*. Some twelve of these *mukhatir*  
were produced before the Commission, and it soon became  
apparent that they had been well drilled and were word-  
perfect. Here are typical examples of their examination,  
as painstakingly taken down by Abu George.

Q. "What is your name?"

A. "I am Abdel Rahman."

Q. "Your full name?"

A. "Abdel Rahman ibn Saleh abu Fethi."

Q. "What is your age?"

A. "I do not know. Only God knows the age of  
man. Who am I that I should know my age?"

Q. "You look about fifty-five. Is that your age?"

A. "Only Allah knows, *Effendi*."

Q. "Shall I put you down as fifty?"

A. "If it pleases your lordship."

## THE COMMISSION'S DAILY WORK

Sir Thomas opens his eyes and looks intently at the man, and then says, "Put him down as being of late middle age."

Q. "Are you the *mukhtar* of such-and-such a village?"

A. "No. I am not the *mukhtar*."

Q. "You are not the *mukhtar*, then who are you?"

A. "I do not know. Only Allah knows."

Q. "Then why have you come here before this Commission?"

A. "I do not know. I was forced to come here."

And so on hopelessly, until at last the *effendi*, who was responsible, is called upon, in desperation, by the Commission, and gives his own carefully concocted account of how the village behaved during the Rising.

In Tulkarm a day was set apart to inquire into the attack upon the near-by Jewish colony of Petach-Tikvah. The same difficulty was again met: the witness denied that he was the *mukhtar*, until the Arab Christian, annoyed by several months of this kind of thing, had an inspiration and asked:

"*Enta el mukhtar-et-Thani?* Are you the deputy headman?"

The honest peasant face broke into smiles, to the despair of the local *effendi* who had produced him, and replied:

"*Namm, ya Jenabtakh el Beyk.* Yes, my lord Bey, I am."

Q. "Do you know anything about the recent attack by the Arabs upon the colony?"

A. "As Allah is my Judge, no."

Q. "Do you know anything about the trouble between Arabs and Jews?"

A. "No." A disarming smile and a look of great inquiry. "Has there been any trouble?"

Q. "You know there has, don't you?"

A. "No, I do not. I am very sorry to hear this. The Jews are my best friends and had I known of this I would have taken my young men and protected them from harm."

Q. "Well then, you will not be able to tell us if any men of your village took part in the recent Rising?"

A. "I am a peaceful man—I work on my fields and then I return home at eventide. No, I am not the man who would know of such matters."

Q. "But you are a *mukhtar*, and surely you know what goes on in your village. Has there been no talk of these things?"

A. "I am a peaceful man, *Effendi*, I work on my fields and then I return home at eventide. I do not listen to talk, for is it not written that much talk leads to mischief?"

Q. "But have you not heard the recent Rising being discussed in your house?"

A. "I am a peaceful man, I work on my fields and when I return to my home at eventide I am too tired to listen to idle talk, and so I have heard nothing."

After listening to every headman telling the identical story, Abu George wrote with great glee in the Commission's report, at the orders of the members:

"With one accord the *mukhatir* committed perjury with dignity and deliberation."

There were long days of work in the court-room, and longer nights spent in co-ordinating and typing the day's evidence—evidence taken in every language, Arabic,

Turkish, Hebrew, Russian, German, French, even in Flemish and Spanish, not to mention Italian, and a dozen Balkan tongues. After some weeks spent on Mount Carmel, whilst the Report was being drawn up and prepared, Abu George found his reward in an honorarium awarded by the Government, and a paragraph of praise in the Report itself, and returned thankfully to his quarters in Jerusalem.

In 1922, Colonel Bramley, impressed by Abu George's brusque manner of getting things done, no less than by his commanding exterior, offered him a commission in the newly raised Palestine Police. He met with considerable difficulty, as his immediate chief, Smallwood, was strenuously opposed to losing such a useful figure ; but, after an interview with Sir Wyndham Deedes, the transfer was completed, and Abu George started on the really interesting part of his duties in Palestine, being appointed Governor of the Central Prison at Acre. He regretted only one thing, and that was the severance with the office of Sir Wyndham Deedes, an idealist, a man of few words and the simplest habits, but too much of a thinker and obvious sympathizer with the Zionists to please his fellows in the service.

In February, when Abu George started on his command of Acre Prison, he had his hands very full. He was the first British officer to take charge, and he found, as might have well been expected, that everything was in the most chaotic condition. Discipline, there was none, bribery and corruption of warders and officers was rampant, whilst the place was anything but secure. Rapidly he reorganized things. He discharged most of the staff and enlisted new personnel, hoping against hope that they would be an improvement on those of whom he had rid

ABU GEORGE STARTS IN OUTREMER himself. At least they would have the advantage of starting their career as policemen under his supervision. He made the place capable of holding desperate convicts, closed up the wide-open entrance to the city, and, above all else, restored discipline.

The comic-opera uniforms of the prisoners were changed, and the ludicrous black and white hoops, necessarily retained as there were no funds forthcoming to allow of their being scrapped, reserved for those newly admitted, or for bad-conduct prisoners. He instituted a "trusty" class of what he termed "convict warders," and, on the old system of setting a thief to catch a thief, found that they were more efficient and certainly less open to corruption than were his policemen warders. So far did he carry this idea of his that he actually had a Greek, a man serving a long sentence, as his chief clerk, and, when he assumed charge of the police sub-district, in addition to his prison duties, this was the man he left in charge, with complete responsibility over everything—native officers, warders, convicts, stores and buildings—and nobly the fellow served him. For recaptured "escapees" and for those who might be labelled as dangerous, he reserved a scarlet uniform, adding a black skull-cap for those sentenced to death.

Mutinies in the early days were common enough, but, after he had got the prisoners under control, he proved to be their moral and physical salvation by commencing a system of prison industries. Instead of being kept in their cells to mope and brood, to hatch plans of escape, or indulge in the terrible forms of homosexuality so prevalent in Palestine, he had them usefully and interestingly employed as blacksmiths, carpenters, rug-makers, weavers, basket-makers and sack-sewers.

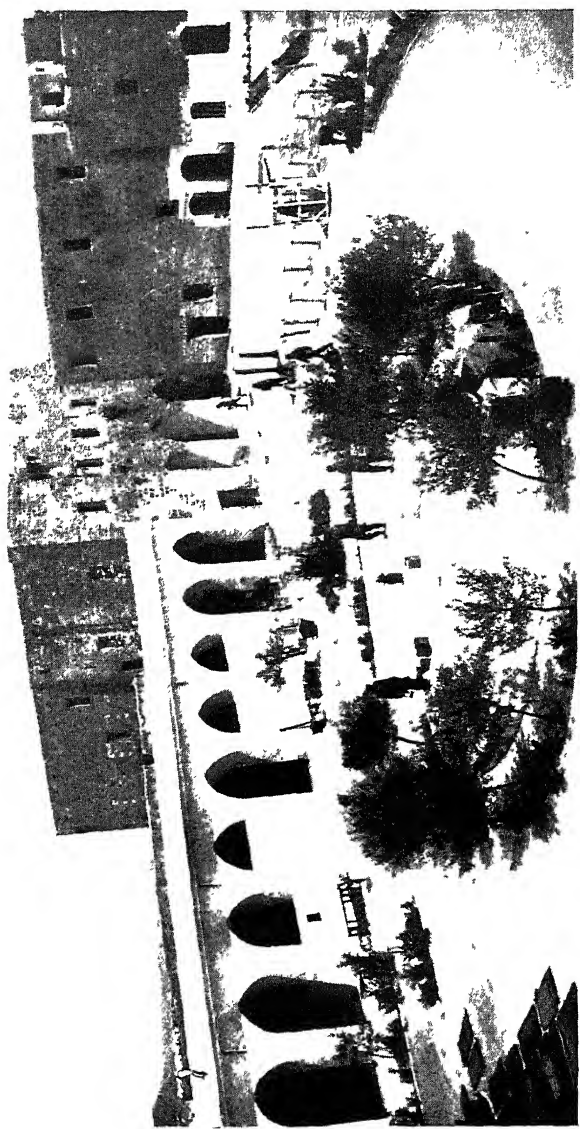
## ACRE PRISON

Abu George's best effort, however, was his formation of a prison camp, the first penal settlement in Palestine under our rule, which he sited about ten miles from the prison, and, with the assistance of the Public Works Engineer, P. Noble, commenced the long-needed road between the northern frontier and Acre. It was easily possible to get from Haifa, the railway terminus, to Acre by driving along the sand of the foreshore, and also from Beirut, the administrative capital of French-mandated Syria, to Ras-el-Nakura, the northern border of the Holy Land. But between that point and Acre stretched, in winter-time, fifteen miles of deep mud and a couple of torrents, rendering all wheeled traffic completely impossible. This was a serious matter, for all communication between Jerusalem and Beirut was completely cut off. There were only two ways to reach the latter city, either by a twice-weekly service of steamers, which often found it impossible to lie in Haifa roads owing to heavy weather, or by a long and arduous railway journey via the Jordan Valley, the valley of the Yarmuk, Deraa, Damascus, and then right across the roof of the Lebanon, often blocked by snow at this season, until the coastal town was reached, a journey that, at the fastest, took over twenty-four hours. It was therefore most important that this small gap should be closed as soon as possible, and Abu George undertook this as his first task.

He had, as I have said before, a fierce longing for all things concerned with the sea, and he conceived the bright idea of forming his penal company on sea-going lines. He selected one prisoner, a long-sentence man whom he knew that he could trust to run the others efficiently, and rated him as "Boatswain." This man was assisted by

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a "Master-at-arms" and two "Chief Petty Officers," who, in their turn, had four "Petty Officers" under them and were assisted by sixteen "Leading Prisoners." It sounds mad enough, I know, *but the thing worked*, and the road rapidly grew into something useful. His system was simple; he realized that the spirit of competition, with something tangible to strive for, would work as well amongst Arabs as with anyone else, probably it was the old spirit of "rigger" coming through the accretions of the years. His camp was divided, first, into two "watches"—Port and Starboard—each under the charge of one of his prisoner Chief Petty Officers. Each watch was divided into four "Tops"—Foretop, Maintop, Mizzen-top and Forecastle—and each "Top" had two parties, Nos. 1 and 2. Over each one there was a prisoner Petty Officer, whilst every party was commanded by a "Leading Prisoner."

Each morning the prisoners were sent out on to the road—one "watch" to the north, the other in the opposite direction. He quickly made the discovery that it was no use laying down definite hours of labour, all Regulations issued by Jerusalem notwithstanding, and found that the method by which he got most out of his men was by setting a daily task, which, when completed, allowed the prisoners to return to camp, or to "fall out" on the side of the road, whilst they waited for their slower comrades to finish, a privilege that they hugely enjoyed. The working-parties consisted of ten men, and the party that most efficiently and most rapidly completed its task received a certain number of marks each day from the sergeant-warder in consultation with the "Boatswain." The party with the highest number of marks at the end of the week, on Thursday evening, received, as reward,



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the privilege of being engaged on the domestic fatigues of the camp for the following week.

It was surprising to see how quickly the team-spirit got hold of these Arab convicts, not only was it well worth while to have a week's rest from the grinding toil of the road and the quarries, but they seemed to get great satisfaction out of being "top-dog." The system called for an immense amount of work by Abu George, for he had to see that the judging was absolutely fair, and that there was no question of bribery regarding either the sergeant-warder or the "Boatswain."

This man wore as the insignia of his office, eight brass buttons on his white jacket, buttons that had once adorned the "reefer" of an officer of the *Empress of Scotland*, whose master, Captain Gilles, was a firm friend to Abu George. On the "Boatswain's" sleeves were another three buttons in a row, whilst a stripe and curl of black tape surmounted the three buttons on each cuff. The same uniform, minus the stripe, was given to the Master-at-arms.

The other insignia Abu George "won" from a sympathetic and highly amused commander of a British destroyer lying in Haifa roads. The "Chief Petty Officers" had the usual Service badges of crown and crossed-anchors, and, to further enhance their dignity, he gave them the three good-conduct stripes that one sees so often on the sleeves of naval ratings of long service. The "Petty Officers" in charge of "tops" had the anchors and crown, without the chevrons, whilst the "Leading Prisoners" sported a "killick," a single anchor, on their sleeves. The prisoners were easily identifiable, and there was no chance of a man deserting his working party and joining one that was more efficient. They

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bore, stamped in black letters, with the prison stencil,  
on the back of their jackets, symbols such as these :

S.	.	.	.	(Starboard Watch)
MZN.	.	.	.	(Mizzen-top)
2	.	.	.	(No. 2 Working Party)

Petty Officers bore as distinguishing marks fewer letters, for they were in charge of "tops," thus :

P.  
FTP.

which meant that he was in charge of the Port Foretop.

The system worked very well, and the metalled road magically took shape. The formation of the camp had been difficult ; it was sited ten miles to the north of the city and, until it was erected, the working party had to haul all materials and march back and forth every morning and evening, leaving little time in which to work on the actual building. A double barbed-wire fence was built, the aprons about ten feet apart, the gate of the outer fence being on a different face to the gate of the inner, forcing anyone entering the enclosed area to walk for some considerable distance between the fences from gate to gate, and ensuring against any attempt, such as was made by British officers confined at Strohen when prisoners of war in Germany, of breaking down the gates, placed one behind the other, with a battering-ram.

As soon as work was started from the camp in both directions, the road was simultaneously commenced from Acre by a party working from the prison. By the second winter the road was passable for wheeled traffic, although far from perfect, and traffic flowed along the new highway. Then, for ten days, it rained and rained *and* rained, coinciding with one of Abu George's best friends and the

custodian of his perennial overdraft, Warner, the manager of the Haifa branch of Barclay's Bank, being transferred to Malta. He had left his departure for the ship waiting at Beirut until the last possible moment, fully relying on Abu George's road. The torrential rains washed away one of the bridges, swirled around the concrete buttresses and destroyed some two hundred yards of surface. A message came through that the Warner family had become hopelessly stuck in the deep mud, and that, unless they were speedily extricated, they would stand no chance of catching the packet at Beirut. Abu George strode down town and commandeered every taxi and lorry standing beside the city gate, and packed most of his prison population into them.

He rushed the convoy to the scene of the washout and found that the narrow water-course, normally dry, had become a rushing torrent. The Warners' car was some yards from the bank with the flood water tearing over the running boards. On the farther bank stood the prisoners from the camp, marshalled under their "Boat-swain" and awaiting his arrival. Behind the Warners were two more cars carrying their baggage, a large Studebaker and a Hudson, but these were still safe on firm ground. Straight into the flood waded Abu George, riding-boots, spurs, Sam Browne belt all complete, leading his convicts. Bodily they picked up the Dodge tourer, and, with the water swirling around their chests by the time they reached the centre of the *wady*, carried the whole family, still in their seats, across to the farther side, and set them down on firm ground. The scene can be easily imagined. As Warner said afterwards, the most trying part was Abu George's language as he heaved and strained, bearing on his shoulders more weight than any

five of his prisoners. The baggage cars were carried across in similar fashion, although the heavy Hudson strained his men's strength to the utmost. Five of them were caught by the stream, and would, inevitably, have been swept away to their deaths in the deeper water downstream, had not Abu George again dashed into the flood, and, with no attempt at life-saving according to any of the recognized methods, got downstream from the struggling men, and then laid about him with the long-lashed riding-whip that he carried. In their frantic efforts to dodge the flailing arm of their Governor, the wretched convicts made a superhuman effort and reached the banks, whilst Abu George, almost drowned, and only holding his stance in the rushing water that reached the flaps of his breast-pockets by his herculean strength, floundered ashore himself.

But the team spirit had grown in the months of hard labour and, instead of a dispirited, draggle-tailed column of wretched men returning to camp and prison, they went singing and shouting, and sat down to the extra delicacies which the money given to Abu George by the grateful Warner provided for them. Hard to believe, but the team spirit can be fostered amongst the Arabs of the lower orders, impossible though it may be to attain amongst their countrymen of the so-called "higher classes."

But his days were not entirely taken up with the grim work of the prison. The Railway Club at Haifa gave its annual Fancy Dress Ball, and Abu George, with his queer, whimsical mind, had a bright inspiration. He had never appeared in fancy dress before, but was persuaded to put in an appearance on this occasion. He first thought of hiring a costume from a Jewish theatrical agency in Jerusalem, and of appearing as "Hamlet."

I pointed out to him that his seventeen-odd stone would appear, to say the least, incongruous, as the melancholy Prince of Denmark. He saw the force of my argument, but the idea of the grotesque appealed to him, and he decided to go as a baby girl of two. The Canadian Pacific liner, *Empress of Scotland*, was lying in Haifa roads at the time, and two of the ship's nurses agreed to fix him up with a costume. One of them had a couple of old lace frocks, and by stitching the two together they were able to make one that would fit his very sturdy figure.

Shoes of children's pattern he had made by his cobblers in Acre prison, size  $10\frac{1}{2}$  they were, whilst little white socks were easily procurable. His undergarments were a problem, but he managed to borrow a pair of colossal linen drawers from the gigantic wife of his chief warder, but he insisted upon wearing a pair of regulation khaki shorts beneath this feminine apparel. A broad sash of "baby-blue" was tied with a big bow around his 48-inch waist, a bow of similar material on his hair. His greatest sacrifice was the loss of his moustache, an ornament of which he was most inordinately proud. It took three of us to dress him, and at least an hour for us to shave his legs to give them somewhat of a childish appearance, or, at least, to try and disguise their likeness to a pair of ursine hind-legs. We made him stand upon a table in his own kitchen whilst we operated with our small safety-razors over the vast area exposed. Then we had to render similar service to his arms and upper chest, whilst he swore and cursed and heartily regretted both his acceptance of the invitation and his choice of costumes.

The worst of it all was that he developed a bad attack of stage fright as we approached Haifa, driving fast along

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the sea-beach. He was usually an abstemious man, but it needed more than a few whisky-and-sodas before he had recovered his nerve sufficiently to face the crowd at the Club.

He was voted the first prize for costumes—but, when they went to find him, poor Abu George's courage had oozed so completely, and so often, and had had to be reinforced so very many times with John Haig, that he was missing. With the age-old code of the soldier in not abandoning a comrade who has fallen under the weather, we searched for him and found him, finally, slumbering peacefully in the early light of the dawn streaming over the far-off hills of Galilee, upon a soldier's grave in the near-by War Cemetery, and, judging by the state of his knees, he had made the journey from the Club, across three fields to the War Cemetery, on all fours.

He was a fierce, bigoted and most rabid teetotaller for more than a year after this episode.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ABU GEORGE PACIFIES ACRE DISTRICT

IN the autumn of 1922, Colonel Percy Bramley, the Deputy-Inspector-General of Police and Prisons, was so struck by the way in which Abu George had organized and improved matters in Acre Prison, that he ordered him to take over charge of the Acre sub-district police as well. Colonel Bramley was an old Indian Police officer, an efficient and imposing person and a good friend to his subordinates if they served him well. Although Major-General Tudor was nominally Inspector-General of Police, this was an office combined with his more important one of G.O.C. the Palestine Command, and Colonel Bramley, for all practical purposes, was unfettered in his administration of the Public Security forces. He trusted Abu George implicitly, realizing that the latter was absolutely loyal to him and untouched with the scheming self-seeking of some of his subordinates.

Abu George's time was now more than fully occupied, for Acre sub-district was as lawless as any other district in Palestine, and, being close to the northern frontier and containing most difficult mountain country, was a favourite hiding-place of outlaws and brigands. One particular tribe of semi-nomadic Bedouin, the Aramshi,

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were particularly cock-a-hoop, for some time previously they had seized the all-powerful British Governor of Acre, Mr. L. Andrews, who was inspecting the area, escorted by a small patrol of Arab mounted police under a native officer, Wadieh Massad. They ran straight into an ambush. Wadieh Effendi was shot in the foot, and the raw, untrained and undisciplined peasants who formed the police patrol fled for their lives. Andrews did his best to make a stand against the Bedouin attackers, but was dragged from his horse and thrown to the ground, where the whole gang started to slowly and methodically beat him to death.

Fortunately there was an Arab Christian girl, from the neighbouring village of Bassa, gathering fuel nearby, she saw exactly what was happening and rushed up to the group. Fiercely she pushed the Arabs aside, taking her life in her hands, for these Moslems would think little of killing a Christian maid, or of submitting her to worse than death, and covered the almost unconscious Governor with her own body as she threw herself on top of him. This, according to inviolable Arab custom, rendered him immune to further attack at the moment. The Bedouins, respecting the ancient code, and mentally storing their vengeance for a future occasion when no interfering woman could be present, withdrew. Andrews was taken to hospital in Haifa, where he very slowly recovered from his extensive injuries. But for the bravery of the Arab maid he would inevitably have been murdered.

Many of these Aramshi, whose land was on the actual frontier, were highway-robbers, brigands, outlaws and cattle-thieves, quick to shoot and kill if their liberty, or their loot, was threatened. Several of the men who beat Andrews were known, and, sentenced in default,

became desperate outlaws, harrying the country-side and skipping over the border whenever a police expedition entered their hills in pursuit.

Abu George determined to clear up this gang as soon as possible ; their continued liberty was a menace to the whole system of British government in Palestine. They had offered a gross insult in their beating of the Governor, and, unless they were brought to justice, nothing was surer than that their example would be emulated in other parts of the Holy Land. By this time Abu George, with his natural aptitude for languages, had become as fluent in Arabic as he already was in French and Italian, and he decided to stop the weasel's earth, first of all, before attempting any direct action against him. In the weeks that followed he crossed the frontier and cemented the most friendly of personal relationships with his "opposite numbers" over the border in the French Mandated territory. He drank with them, dined with them, brought them to Acre and entertained them, visited their houses, and their wives and his became intimates. They were a mixed crowd. There was M. Pinçon, the French Adviser at Sidon, whom Abu George found a real good personality and a staunch friend, always ready to give a helping hand, and with whom Abu George carried out some little deals in the mutual handing over of criminals without all the formalities of a court case to decide upon extradition. This was easily arranged. The wanted man was taken to the frontier by an escort of mounted police. There they would "accidentally" encounter, on the other side of the border-line, a party of the other country's police. The man would be told that he was at liberty to go, and the escort would gallop away from him. The other side,

taking advantage of the *Bon Voisinage* agreements contracted by their respective Governments, would then enter the other territory and arrest the "wanted" criminal, as they were allowed to do, by the letter of the law, when in hot pursuit of an escaping offender.

Emir Fares Shaab, an elderly gentleman and a former member of the Turkish Parliament, and now Governor of Tyre, was another of Abu George's firmest friends. He was rather a pompous, self-dignified man, but most useful, as he said he kept all the men wanted by Palestine "in his pocket." Another was Naama abu Shekhra, a young, zealous and most efficient Druze officer of the Syrian Gendarmerie, who was of the greatest assistance in Abu George's work of clearing the sub-district of outlaws.

The actual frontier area is a most difficult one, very mountainous, with deep valleys, and with a high scrub of dwarf-oak and other trees covering the slopes, rendering the work of the mounted police most arduous and dangerous. His new liaison with the local heads of the administration north of the border brought speedy results, a prisoner escaped from the prison camp, engaged in building the new road between Acre and Ras-el-Nakoura. On the 6th of the month, Abu George wrote to Emir Fares Shaab; on the 8th the man was handed over to one of his patrols, together with a revolver and ammunition that the convict had stolen from the camp when he escaped. The next day, after the man's arrival at the prison, Mr. Richard Cadbury visited Acre and was taken around by Abu George. The convict had evidently heard of the many philanthropies of the Cadbury family and tried to ingratiate himself by having a bunch of violets brought from the Persian Gardens, north of the walls, and presented to the visitor. Abu George heard

of it just in time to put a stop to the little scheme, but had the violets duly presented, and was fair enough, although without disclosing their source, to allow the man to speak to the visitor as he passed the cells in which the man was undergoing solitary confinement.

On the 21st of March, 1923, Abu George received information from his friends north of the line that a nasty little cattle thief, Suleiman Ali, was about to make a raid into Palestine and run off a few beasts. He immediately proceeded north and came upon the raiders, as, incommoded by their loot, they were making for a pass through the Aramshi territory. There were nine of the raiders, all well armed, whereas Abu George had only three Arab troopers at his back. As the robbers saw the police patrol, they fired a ragged volley and bunched together to scare them away, thinking that they would be frightened by their superior strength, but Abu George drove his spurs into his horse, drew his revolver, and with a whoop and a yell to his men to follow him, charged straight at the gang. When they saw him coming, unscared by their desultory fire, they broke and ran, with the police at full gallop after them. Some got away on the rough mountain-side, but Abu George shot Suleiman Ali, and brought him in, just alive, to the prison hospital at Acre, whilst those who escaped were rounded up by him as they attempted to cross the frontier, only to find a strong force of Syrian Gendarmerie barring their exit. So was another gang "mopped up."

One of the prisoners who was most useful to him was a Jew called Moscovitz, a really excellent clerk and accountant, who looked after his routine work most efficiently whilst he was away in the hills. On this particular occasion, when he returned with the wounded man to

the prison, Abu George found Moscovitz apparently gloriously drunk and sitting in his office in his own particular chair. The Jew looked up as he came in.

"What you want? Gerrout—I hate fat men."

Abu George, his breath completely taken away, slowly turned purple and gasped for words.

"Go on—gerrout—I don't like your face," hiccupped the prisoner, whilst a row of grinning policemen looked through the door. "Some of you men there," continued Moscovitz in Arabic, beckoning to the policemen, "take him outside and fling him into the sea—he smells."

And then the storm burst! Moscovitz was taken in those herculean arms and flung straight through the window, taking woodwork and glass with him, landing, miraculously uninjured, on the gravel path outside, where he sat up and cheered as he saw Abu George scrambling through the window after him. His next remark probably saved his life, for he said with a leer:

"Well, old Fatty, they may have thought that they got me drunk, but I did them in the eye. I had to take their brandy so as to deceive them, but I didn't give them the files. Hee, hee, hee," and burst into a paroxysm of giggles.

This brought the angry officer up "all standing." He had Moscovitz taken away and put in the solitary cells with a couple of buckets of sea-water thrown over him to assist rapid recovery, and then turned all his clerks to work checking up the filing cabinets. None were missing and he had to await Moscovitz's recovery before he found the truth of the matter. It appeared that a certain editor of a small newspaper had been sending illicit presents to the Jew whilst Abu George's back was turned, and had finally promised twenty-five pounds to Moscovitz's wife and a bottle of brandy for the prisoner if

he would give him, for a couple of days, a few of the secret files. Moscovitz had been loyal, however, and, though not scorning to take the rascally little editor's bribe, had refused to carry out his part of the contract. Abu George demanded the money, and it was duly given up to him, Moscovitz remarking :

"It is no use taking the money from my wife, sir. Do you think that the editor will admit having given it to me ? You will not be able to prove anything and will only have to give it back to me."

And so it proved. The editor, concealing his chagrin, denied all knowledge of the money, and it had to be returned to Mme Moscovitz. Some time afterwards, Abu George asked Moscovitz the reason for the projected theft of the files. He pointed out that the editor could not have used them, their source would have been too evident. The Jew replied :

"I know, sir. That was not the idea at all. The man came to see me and thinking, naturally, that I, a convict, would be certain to have a grudge against you, explained his plan. He first of all tried to throw dust in my eyes, but I flatter myself that I am as clever as he, and he had to tell me the truth. His idea was to get these files whilst you were away after this man Suleiman Ali, expecting that you would be gone for some days and would then come back empty-handed. He wanted to send them up to Headquarters with an anonymous letter, something after this style :

*"To the Inspector-General of Police*

*"EXCELLENCY,*

*"I am but a poor man, but I love the truth and justice, and I wish well to the Government, therefore I*

am taking a great risk in trying to show my loyalty. If you appreciate this loyalty, then, maybe later, when all suspicion has died down, I will make myself known to your noble Excellency, and you will reward me with a post in the Government service. ("That would sound very convincing as a motive for sending the letter," reflected Abu George, as he listened to the prisoner.)

"Because I am a lover of truth and honour, I wish you to know how evilly your officer here in Acre serves you. Abu George is a traitor to our kind Government, for there is a wealthy man, an enemy to the English, in Acre, to whom he always shows the secret orders of the Government, and he even allows this man to keep the files for hours in his possession, and to take them across to his evil comrades in Haifa.

"Loving honour and truth as I do, I have risked my life, and those of my children, to enter this naughty man's house by night and take some of these secret files, which I now send on to you as proof that my story is true. Keep them, my lord the Pasha who commands the great police, and send quickly here to Acre and search the file cases of Abu George, and you will find that these files are missing. He is even now absent from Acre, and will be away for some days, so I pray you act quickly. Gladly would I sign this letter, hating all unsigned letters as must every man of honour, but I fear for my life, as Abu George is well-known for his cruelty, and I also fear the man to whom he sells these files.

"Your Humble and truth-loving servant,

"A TRUE FRIEND OF PALESTINE."

Abu George gasped as he heard the tale. What if Moscovitz had given up the files? His return to Acre

would have been the greeting of an officer from Headquarters blandly demanding the files.

"But, Moscovitz, I do not know this editor man, and I am sure that he can have nothing against me. Why should he go to all this trouble in order to get me 'into the cart'?" asked the officer.

"For many reasons, sir," answered Moscovitz. "First of all it would gratify his vanity that he had managed to get one of you hated English officers dismissed with ignominy from his position. Secondly, because you are too energetic in your pursuit of criminals in your District, and you can be sure that the editor has many friends who are 'on the run,' and, perhaps, thirdly, and more likely, he has been well paid to get you out of the way."

There was no way to substantiate the story—if he reported the whole affair to Headquarters it would merely earn a cynical and intolerant smile and he would be asked if he was fool enough to swallow such a cock-and-bull story—it would be pointed out that it was greatly to the prisoner's advantage to worm himself into his good graces by inventing the yarn. But Abu George felt that the plot had existed—worse things than this have been done against too-zealous officers of police by those past-masters of low intrigue, the Palestinian *effendieh*. The only thing to do was to be thankful, and to be more on his guard in the future.

He decided to cultivate the acquaintance of the editor, and with this end in view invited the man, over a glass of beer in the restaurant kept by an old Christian, Yacoub, near the Custom House, to come up and see the collection of weapons in his house. The editor was only too flattered at receiving the invitation and readily accepted.

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He angled for and received a further invitation to have a look over the prison, and within a couple of weeks believed himself firmly established in Abu George's confidence. The officer on his part, taking the fullest advantage of the growing intimacy, carefully gave the impression that he was extremely venal and that he was willing to help the editor in any way that might prove remunerative to him. One night the newspaper man, fired with too much *arak*, which he had been drinking stolidly for some three hours, grew voluble, and confided to Abu George the secrets of running his type of a vernacular newspaper for the Palestinian Arabs. I am certain that such tactics are not followed by the more reputable journals.

"It is very easy, Abu George," he boasted, sipping the milky-white, aniseed-flavoured spirit in his glass, "so easy that a child could make money out of running a paper in my fashion. First of all I select some wealthy and respectable victim, find out who are his most bitter enemies, and, as you know, all of us have them, and then go round and see these enemies and offer to attack the victim in my columns, of course for a consideration. I write my copy, and then go and see the victim and show it to him. He gets into a terrible rage and accuses his enemies of having supplied the particulars, which are generally true, and ends up by paying me a large sum not to publish the thing. He then goes on to offer me more to print certain tales about the people who have traduced him. Back I go to them, and so the game goes merrily on, until either they grow weary of it, or else run out of money. I know they all hate me, but I know too much about them and so they dare do nothing against me. Now, my dear friend," he continued, leering into

the bottom of his glass and reaching out for the three-parts empty bottle, "if you like to come in with me, I can, with the information you possess, make a great deal of money for both of us."

Abu George, longing to plant his riding-boot into the man's trouser-seat, grinned cheerily, and said that he would consider the matter. He had got the handle he wanted in case the editor should try to get him into any trouble. It should not be hard to get some notable who was smarting under the exactions of the little parasite to lay an information when the time should come. But, fortunately, the problem solved itself. Ridicule, the most feared bugbear of the *effendieh*, stepped in and put a stop to the little man's blackmailing activities. A Jewish match factory, the "Nur," was to be opened in Acre, and the editor, despite all his fire-eating articles and fulminations against the Chosen People, was only too willing, for a consideration and a good luncheon, to make a fulsome speech welcoming Jewish industry to the Arab town. To the lunch he did more than justice, so much so that his immediate neighbours filled up his pockets with sardines, olives and slices of greasy fat from the roast sheep that graced the centre of the board.

His eyesight was bad, and as he arose, with an oily smirk, to commence his speech, he dived his hand into his pocket for a handkerchief to polish his glasses—and out came a shower of scraps and oddments of food. His remarks were unprintable, and grew more lurid when one of his enemies slyly asked if he was doing so badly with his paper that he had to fill his pockets with food when he was dining out, so that his family should have something to eat. Poverty and loss of face are the unpardonable crimes amongst your low *effendieh*.

## ABU GEORGE PACIFIES ACRE DISTRICT

Already shaken by this incident, he was completely overwhelmed by a second one that happened a few days later. He had been attacking, vitriolically, a certain notable of Acre, and had printed the most scurrilous defamations against him. The man's brothers resented this deeply and arranged for revenge. The editor made his usual perambulation through the bazaars of Acre, his nose uptilted as he snooped for news, and, when outside the notable's shop, he was stopped by one of the brothers and engaged in conversation. He was listening eagerly to a wonderful tale the man was telling him about another local notability, when the younger brother came suddenly behind him and tipped a four-gallon petrol-tin, filled with excreta from the municipal lavatories, over his head and ran away. The editor's eyesight was so bad that when he brought his case in the courts against the two brothers he was unable to identify them and they escaped with a nominal fine of fifty piastres (about ten shillings). Immediately other victims decided that such an attack was well worth the price, and the editor had to make a hurried departure from Acre, much to the relief of all in that town and Abu George in particular. Only once again did he make an appearance in his own city, and then he was savagely beaten by two hired bravoos especially sent down from Jerusalem, who, and again on account of the victim's bad eyesight, escaped scot-free.

Meanwhile, murder after murder occurred in the area—fourteen in the first three months of his assuming charge of the police division. There was an especially bad case at Ghabsieh, in which three brothers were implicated. They immediately turned outlaw and shot at the first sight of a police uniform. After one very arduous and

## BAPTISM OF ROSALIE

long-drawn-out patrol, Abu George returned home, weary and saddle-sore, to find his wife entertaining her countryman, Mgr Louis Barlassina, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The prelate immediately attacked him and demanded to know when he proposed having his second child, Rosalie, born the previous year, baptised. Rosalie was a pretty, winsome little thing, with a complexion and features that were a direct throw-back to his Sligo ancestors, with eyes of blue-grey, fringed by the darkest lashes, and brows of the deepest blue-black hair.

Wanting, more than anything, a bath and a change of clothing, the officer replied :

“ I will have her baptised as soon as possible, Your Beatitude.”

“ Ah, but no, sir,” answered the Patriarch, “ seeing that I am in Acre, I will be very glad to baptise her myself.”

Abu George scowled. “ It is too much honour for such a great dignitary as Your Beatitude to baptise my child.” Mentally he wished all princes of the Church at the bottom of the Mediterranean at the moment, so that he could get out of his travel-stained and uncomfortable clothes and changed into something clean and fresh. “ I will have the baptism done as soon as I can.”

But the Patriarch would take no denial, and baptised Rosalie was, there and then, in Abu George’s house, to the no small wonderment of her two-year-old brother George, who stood wonderingly by whilst these strangers did such queer things in his father’s house.

At this time Abu George had become more than a little material in his spiritual outlook. There was little chance for him, even had he cared, to pay attention to his religious duties, whilst life in Acre division was little

likely to give him an exalted idea of the potentialities of the human spirit. Death in its nastiest and most repulsive forms was always too near at hand to increase his faith in any personal immortality. But a little incident occurred at this time that gave him furiously to think.

Near the village of Mejdal Kerum he had an outpost of about a dozen mounted Arab police, commanded by a grizzled old Kurdish sergeant. One day, whilst inspecting the post, he was struck by the emaciated appearance of one of the troopers, a lad named Mohammed Ibrahim el Muhtadi of some twenty-two years of age. This man had been one of the handsomest and strongest *sowaris* in Acre division, and Abu George was very surprised to see the weak state of health that he was in. He called the sergeant and asked for an explanation.

"The boy is in love with a *djinnieh*, a female spirit from the Pit of Hell," answered the old man gruffly.

Abu George knew his man too well to allow an incredulous snort to escape him, and asked for particulars.

"He goes each night to the olive grove below Baneh village," answered the sergeant, "and there meets this daughter of Hell. She sucks the life from him and soon he will be dead."

Of course the officer did not believe a word of this story and said so. The sergeant then asked him if he would come with him that night and watch what happened, gruffly stating that he was not used to being called a liar, whether by his officer, or by any other man. Abu George agreed; he could do no less. That evening they shadowed the trooper without his knowing anything about it, and saw him enter the extensive olive-groves between Baneh and the Christian village of Rameh. They were not far behind the lad as he reached the shelter of

## THE GODDESS AND THE TROOPER

the trees, and stayed close as he walked through them. Finally he halted at the edge of a clearing, in the middle of which were a few heaps of stones and rubble, and looked eagerly about him. Abu George and the sergeant kept as close to the boles of the ancient trees as they could, and watched.

Suddenly he gave a glad little cry and ran forward towards the centre of the place, close to one of the heaps of ruined masonry. There he appeared to be embracing something that was quite invisible to the two watchers, and went through all the emotions of a most passionate and protracted love affair as he lay upon the ground.

Next morning Abu George sent for the trooper, and had him brought, under arrest, to his office in Acre. Without his belt the lad was marched into the office by the stentorian-voiced station-sergeant.

"Mohammed," commenced Abu George, pretending to read from a disciplinary charge-sheet on his table, "you are charged with conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline in that you have been consorting immorally with a peasant girl living near your station. What have you got to say?"

"It is true, my lord Bey," answered the young man. "I have been meeting a young girl, but she is of such startling beauty that I could not resist her——"

Abu George cut him short. "Is it not written that all women are fair to those who desire them? I do not wish to hear aught of your unsavoury love affairs. You know the orders which forbid you to consort with the girls of the surrounding villages when you are posted near them. Do you wish to marry this girl?"

"With all my heart, *Effendi*, but she refuses to wed me. But I would know who has seen me with her," he

continued, "for my comrades have ever laughed at me when I described her, and latterly they have said that I was mad—and sometimes I think I must be," he ended wearily, wiping his brow with one of his hands.

"Attention—keep your hand beside you," barked the station-sergeant.

"With my eyes I saw you, last evening, Mohammed," replied Abu George.

He was surprised to see the note of surprise, of relief, that shot across the young man's face.

"You saw her, *Effendi*, you say you saw her? Then, *Alhamdulillah*, Praise to the One, I am *not* mad, as I sometimes feared, for you also have seen her," he shouted.

"Silence," thundered Abu George, puzzled at the obvious earnestness of the young man. "You are but young and I shall deal lightly with you. Go back to your outpost, and be careful that you see no more of this village maid, or I shall punish you severely. Dismiss!"

A few days later he had almost forgotten the matter, there were far more serious things to be considered than the delusions of a young trooper, but he was reminded of it again when he saw Mohammed attending the sick parade at Acre. The young man looked ghastly, and he made a mental note to ask the Kurd sergeant how the lad was behaving himself, the next time he went up to Mejdal Kerum.

When he did go he was accompanied by an official of the Antiquities Department who was very anxious to see how much of the Crusaders' abbey remained at Deir el Assad, a village neighbouring Baneh. He arranged to meet the Inspector later in the day at Rameh, and to spend the night there, returning the next day to Acre by way of Mejdal Kerum. That night in the house of

Showki Deeb, the Christian mayor of Rameh, the Antiquities man seemed very pleased with himself, for he had discovered in addition to the crusading ruins for which he was searching, the vestiges of a Temple to Astarte in the olive groves between Baneh and Rameh. He described the position of the ruins to Abu George, who saw immediately that they were the rubble heaps in the clearing where he had watched the antics of the young trooper.

The next day at Mejdol Kerum he found the old sergeant very angry and in despair about Mohammed.

"I can do nothing with him, *Effendi*," he said. "He is always leaving the outpost and sneaking away to the olive grove. I wish that you would take him away and post him somewhere else, for I am afraid that he will die of sheer exhaustion if he stays here. I do not wish anything to happen to him, for his father is an old friend and comrade of mine. We were together in Armenia, and also on Gallipoli when we fought you men of the *Ingliz*."

Abu George found it was true; the young man had faded away to practically nothing, and, when taxed, admitted that he was still meeting the girl in the olive grove. "I cannot resist her, *Effendi*; I have tried to stay away, but she calls me, calls me until I must go, or I feel that I should die."

The upshot of it was that Abu George quietly arranged for his transfer to Beersheba, where, after two attempts at desertion, he finally settled down and became himself again. Some two months later Abu George was making a tour of the villages in his area, and, as was his wont, remained to *faddle*, in other words to gossip, with the village elders, a very useful custom by which, over

innumerable pots of coffee, he became possessed of much worth-while information. At a loss for news or of something interesting to talk about, he told the assembled elders the story of the young trooper and the girl he was supposed to have met in the olive groves beneath their village.

He was surprised to see with what intent eagerness they listened to what he thought to be merely an aimless and laughable tale. When he finished they sat silent, looking intently at him, and then with one accord, said :

“ *Alhamdulillah! Alhamdulillah!* Praise be to the One,” and said it with such obvious sincerity, that he asked them the reason for their returning thanks.

The old *mukhtar* spoke, slowly and deliberately :

“ *Effendi*, this day you have brought us great news, greater and more welcome news than you could ever imagine, for you have lifted a great weight of anxiety from us. You should know that, every thirty years, this *Djinnieh*, this daughter of *Shaitan*, the Evil One, may his name be accursed, takes toll of our village. Every thirty years she appears and takes the handsomest and finest young man in our village. Is it not so, *ya Akhwani*, O my brothers ? ” and he looked around the circle of grizzled, bearded faces, who solemnly nodded agreement.

“ The last time this happened, *Effendi*, was four years before the visit of the great *Kizar ul Alliman*, the Emperor of the Germans, when she took my brother, Hafiz. He could not be restrained from going nightly to the grove, and, daily, he grew weaker and weaker, until at last we found him dead amongst those accursed ruined walls you have mentioned. The time before that was when I was but a babe, it was two years after the Druze rose on the mountains of Lebanon and murdered the Maronites,

the year when the accursed French landed, and had the *Wali* of Damascus executed for not protecting the monks in his city. Then she took the uncle of Sheikh Abdel Rahman who died two years ago, and my father told me that, about seven years before you *Ingliz* bombarded Acre and drove out the Egyptians, she took another of our young men."

"That is true," gravely confirmed another of the elders, "and I have heard, when I was a boy, from the old men, that, about four years after you *Ingliz* helped the Turks to defend Acre against Abuna Barte (Napoleon Bonaparte), she also had her young man from amongst us, and thus it has ever been."

"You ask why we are thankful, *Effendi*," resumed the *mukhtar*; "now you can see, for we have all been afraid that as the time had come again, we should lose one of our sons or grandsons to this evil woman, who has drunk the blood of every generation of our village since the earliest days. Now she has taken a stranger, and, *inshallah*, she will be satisfied with him."

But some of the others looked dubious. "But the man yet lives, *ya Hadrat el Mukhtar*, your Honour the Headman, and maybe she will still require a life from amongst us."

And seeing that the deepest gloom at this doubt had again settled upon the gathering, Abu George got to horse and continued on his way, though he afterwards discovered that no other young man had suffered from the same delusions or had mysteriously wasted away. Evidently Astarte, or the Djinnieh, or whatever it was, was satisfied.

## CHAPTER SIX

### “LATEEFA”

THERE was continual trouble with the Aramshi Bedouin, living on the Syrian-Palestinian frontier. Crime after crime was committed. Men who were fugitives from the French authorities sheltered with the Arabs, improved their enforced leisure by occasional highway robberies and murders on the southern side of the line, and made a profitable side-line of tobacco and drug smuggling, mixed with a little judicious gun-running.

The approach to their territory was very difficult, leading through the steep range of hills whose seaward end forms the Ladder of Tyre, which were covered with low trees and thick brushwood. It was practically impossible to approach them without their knowledge, still less to march up the only track known to the mounted police, without incurring the gravest risk of being ambushed by the tribesmen. Consequently they had been left severely alone by the new and still somewhat shaky Mandated Government of the Holy Land. But, with the attempted murder of Andrews and the many crimes that were being committed, Abu George saw that it was imperative that the tribesmen should be taught a lesson as soon as possible.

The only way to do it was to take a certain Abu Kader

into his confidence. This man, a staunch and useful friend to Abu George, had been "blacklisted" by Jerusalem, acting on the reports of a certain ill-informed officer in Haifa, who had never seen the man, and had only the reports of some of Abu Kader's enemies upon which to work. He had been confidentially reported to be politically disaffected, and to act as a *wasta* for the brigands who infested the Northern District, i.e. he acted as an intermediary between the robbers and their victims, and, for a consideration from both of them, restored the property that had been taken, charging the robbers an extra percentage under the pretext of being able to buy them immunity from the police. Abu George found him entirely devoted to the new Government, probably from self-interest, and that he was the most useful and loyal person in his area, to help him deal with the criminal element.

Arranging with his friends in Syria to have all exits northwards blocked by Gendarmerie and Spahis, he rode with a strong patrol for the Aramshi country, accompanied by Abu Kader, whose wife was herself a member of the tribe, although he belonged to the princely house of Bastun. All went well until they reached the most difficult part of the journey, the rough hill tracks above Khirbet Idmir, where their order of march bore a strong resemblance to that of a fly on a ceiling. Here they were met by a young Bedouin boy bearing a message of defiance from his sheikh, warning them that, if they tried to penetrate any farther into the tribal territory, they would be ambushed and shot to a man. Abu Kader promptly rose in his stirrups, brought his *kurbaj* snaking around the lad's shoulders, and, stuttering with rage, roared :

“Go, boy, tell that son of fifty leprous fathers, that upstart who calls himself Sheikh of the Aramshi, that I, Abu Kader, ride with Abu George and his men, and I demand instant admittance to his territory. Let him dare to fire but one shot and I will drive him and his tribesmen forth from their lands, so that they shall wander, a people without lands and without a name, until poverty forces them to sever company and the Aramshi tribe will be no more than a reminder of the vengeance of Abu Kader.”

As the boy hurried away, the British officer looked at Abu Kader and was surprised to see a huge wink in one of his eyes.

“What think you of that, Abu George?” he asked with a broad grin.

The officer was astonished. “I did not know that you had so much power over the Aramshi, Abu Kader.”

“Neither have I,” answered the Arab gentleman, “but they are all heavily in debt to my brothers, and know that we could foreclose on them at any time. Also I know a few things about Sheikh Abdu Rahman, and if I opened my mouth he would be safely locked up in your prison at Acre, or else spend a lifetime with the French in the Castle of Sidon. The same is true of many of his men and he, and they, know it.”

Abu George remarked that in the circumstances it would be to the sheikh’s advantage to have them quietly ambushed and the knowledge of Abu Kader quietened for ever. Again the grin.

“That would be true if I was not the man I am. But my family would never rest if they murdered me, until they had stamped the Aramshi flat. The blood-feud that would start would be far too much for such a small

tribe to risk. No, believe me, we are quite safe from attack on this journey at least."

They off-saddled at the Khirbet, a miserable collection of hovels, in order to rest the horses after the gruelling march from Acre, and, not to waste time, Abu George ordered his men to search the building for contraband and arms, at the same time lining up the inhabitants to see if there were any "wanted" criminals amongst them. A brand-new German Mauser rifle was discovered in the house of a certain man named Diab. Nothing more was discovered, although all the men were tied together by their long hair, and given some hours of exercise running up and down the steep hillside in one long line. They remained quietly determined to betray nothing to the terrible troopers, and, just as their questioning was finished, the Mudir of Alwa, a Syrian official under the French, arrived in the village and claimed the rifle as his property, stating that he had left it at Diab's house early that morning. He had been hunting, so he said, and wanting to get back quickly to his seat of government, had left the rifle as he intended to return to search for a leopard that had been reported in the vicinity. It was plainly a "put-up" job, but, as Abu George realized, it was of no use to antagonize his friends amongst the Syrian officials engaged on frontier duties, over such a trivial matter, and he pretended belief in the Mudir's story.

It was no surprise when he discovered later that the Mudir was a particular friend of Diab's wife, and that she had run off from the village immediately the police entered, and, crossing the frontier, had hurried the short distance to Alwa to fetch her friend.

As the patrol marched into the Aramshi territory

proper, Abu George's attention was drawn by moans from the far side of a huge boulder beside the track, at a place about five miles from the Khirbet, and, dismounting, he went to see what was the matter. Lying on the ground was a young and extremely attractive Bedu girl, a huge headload of the brushwood she had been gathering lying near her. Seeing the officer approaching her, she instinctively drew the corner of her head cloth across her face, and stared intently at him.

“What ails thee, girl?” asked Abu George gruffly.

“*Effendi*, it is my ankle. Half-a-mile back I slipped and fell under my load of wood, and it has taken me a long time to reach the track, where I hoped to attract the attention of some passer-by so that I might be helped to my father's tent at the Khirbet,” she replied.

By this time Abu Kader had joined his friend, and looked closely at the bonny, brown face of the maid.

“Thou art Lateefa, the granddaughter of the Sheikh of the Aramshi, are you not?” he asked.

“Yes, Abu Kader Bey, I am,” she replied; “and this *Inglizi* must be the Abu George of whom I have heard so much and whom my people, fearing him greatly, have sworn to kill.”

“Yes, I am Abu George,” answered the officer. “But let me see that ankle of thine, and maybe I shall be able to do something for you.”

“I have heard that you are a spoiler of women, Abu George Effendi, and that you are very cruel and hard to people of my blood,” she answered shyly “Yet your face does not seem bad, although you have the blue eyes of *Shaitan* himself. It is open and frank, tanned by the wind and weather like those of our race, and not the pale face of a city man imagining all sorts of filthiness

in the comforts of a town house. See, here is where the pain lies," and fearlessly, frankly displayed what would have been a very shapely brown ankle, had it not been marred by the swelling of a cruel sprain.

He drew his First Field Dressing from its pocket, washed the swelling with some of the cold water from his water-bottle, broke the iodine phial over the numerous cuts and scrapes on the ankle, and then put a good tight bandage around it. Silently, intently she watched him, glancing at him out of the corner of her long hazel eyes.

"It seems, *Effendi*, that the tales I have heard about you lie. From your face I can see that you are no ruthless spoiler of maidens or lecherous marauder of women. Your eyes, though they are of the accursed colour, are traitors to your face. That is hard and merciless enough, yet I see that your eyes are those of a little boy and very gentle. I thank thee, Abu George Effendi, and now if you will give me the two stoutest of the sticks behind you I will manage to reach my father's tent."

"No, Lateefa, I will send you back with two of my men, so that you may ride as befits the granddaughter of a chief. Your ankle is too painful to walk all that distance."

"*Effendi*, you know little of women, and therefore do I disbelieve the stories I have heard all the more," she said, smiling into the grim face above her. "Dost think that it will be good for a maiden of the Arab to be seen riding into her father's camp, sitting on a horse of the hated police, and with a couple of troopers beside her? No, do not argue," she raised a tiny, imperious hand, as he began to protest that she was in no state to walk home, "I know best, and I can easily manage now that you have dressed my hurts. Such a thing is nothing for

me or for any girl of my blood, who are well inured to hardship. Go with peace, Abu George, and,” her voice sank to a whisper, “go not by the road beneath the castle of the ancient *Salabiyeen* (Crusaders), for amongst the ruins are hidden half-a-hundred riflemen of my tribe under my uncle, and they will never let you pass. Abu Kader they will not kill, but the rest of you are doomed, and you they want most of all. Wait at Acre until I send you one who will bear this bandage of yours as a token, and I will show you another road into the territory of my people, so that you may come and rid us of the many bad men who live in our tents and hold us to shame. Until I send my messenger, wait.”

Abu George was intensely surprised at the turn events had taken, and allowed the girl to hobble away on her improvised crutches. He cantered up to Abu Kader, who had ridden on when he had commenced bandaging the girl's ankle, and told him that he had decided not to enter the Aramshi territory after all, but that they would go on to Bukeia, where there had been reported the murder of a Christian woman.

Turning aside, the cavalcade rode into the village, one of the oldest in Palestine, and extremely interesting as it holds the most ancient community of Jews in the Holy Land. They have been there for many centuries ; according to their own story they are the descendants of the Jews who lived there before the Dispersion, it is quite probable they are, and that they escaped both Roman and Arab exterminators. It is in a most inaccessible spot in the mountains, and may well have been overlooked, even by those professed and bitter anti-Semites, the Crusaders. In this village, small as it is, there are three distinct communities, Christian, Jew

## THE LION AND THE LAMB

and Moslem, they live, and always have done, in the most perfect amity and accord. The Jewish community claims that both the Christians and Moslems living amongst them are of Hebrew blood, that they represent the people who apostatized many centuries ago. It is certain that the good offices of both these communities have time and again, according to the local tradition, saved the Jews of the village from persecution and even martyrdom, under the many conquerors these villages have known since Flavius Josephus surrendered in the well of Jotapata, and the last trace of independent Israelitish rule disappeared. A small Druze community, also, inhabits the outskirts of the place and lives on the most cordial relationship with the other peoples.

Riding into the village at the head of his men, Abu George had expected to find the place seething with excitement, and to find the Christians demanding vengeance at his hands from one of the other sects, a situation which would have arisen in any other part of Palestine. Here the elders of the four communities had met together and were solemnly discussing the affair. They rose as he entered, and, after offering him coffee, conducted him to the scene of the crime.

The woman had been shot whilst asleep. From the position of her wound, and the place in which he found the bullet, it was obvious that she had been killed by some person lying beside her. Her jewellery was missing and there was no trace of a gun anywhere. Having ordered the body to be interred, for in those days the regulations regarding Coroners' warrants were not formulated, or, at least, observed, Abu George walked back to the meeting house, and asked the opinion of the collected elders.

They produced one man as witness, an elderly Moslem, extremely reluctant to speak. Abu George found that this unwillingness was because he had to explain his presence abroad in the village in the very early hours of the morning, by admitting a clandestine and highly illicit love affair with a young widow, and he was very frightened of the vengeance of the woman's male relatives, who would most certainly seek both their lives, in the time-honoured Arab custom, as some salve to their wounded honour. As a witness he was not a great deal of use, all that he could say was that he had heard the shot, and had seen the husband run out of the house, shouting : “Come all ye people, we are robbed and my wife is murdered.”

Abu George sat down to a long interrogation of the husband, and elicited the facts that the dead woman was barren, that he was in love with another woman, and, being a Christian he was not free to take other wives. The other woman had a comfortable dowry and was extremely prepossessing, and he had actually told her he would marry her soon, as his wife was ailing and would not live long. The husband was arrested, the position of the wounds were sufficient to show that the murderer had been someone in the victim's confidence, and that no robber would have, or could have, fired from a position to inflict such wounds, despite the fact that some jewellery was missing. In due course the man was brought to trial, but was acquitted as there was no one willing to give evidence on the salient points. Fear of starting a blood-feud in the event of the execution of the prisoner was enough to seal all mouths, as it is elsewhere in the Holy Land.

But there was much more happening to take Abu

## MURDER OF BRITISH GENDARMES

George's attention away from the Aramshi for the time being, for the British Gendarmerie escort to Sir Herbert Samuel, the High Commissioner, was ambushed, and several British constables killed, in the neighbouring police division of Safed, and, above everything else, the murderers had to be tracked down and brought to justice. Abu George was at Rameh, a village between Acre and Safed, in the mountains, when the news of the attack reached him. He had been heavily engaged in a running fight with an armed gang since early morning, and the quarry had disappeared in the high hills a little while before. He had come into Rameh to get fresh horses to replace the almost foundered Police chargers, and was resting for a few minutes in the house of a Christian notable, Naim Deeb, when a runner came up from the neighbouring police outpost to tell him that Sinclair, the District Commandant of Police for Northern Palestine, had arrived in the village and wanted to see him at once.

Abu George, scenting a practical joke, as the last person he expected to find was the D.C.P. in such a remote place, told the man to go back and not play the fool. Then, in a storm of curses, the D.C.P. arrived, accompanied by Major Howard of the Palestine Gendarmerie with a squadron of his red-sashed troopers. The tale of the attack on the High Commissioner's escort was rapidly told, and the officers came to the conclusion that the attackers, who had all been of the Druze people, would most probably be hiding in Nebi Haida, the tomb of some forgotten holy man named Haida. This place was high up in the mountains of Upper Galilee, and was seemingly inaccessible, except by one very narrow track, which anyone hiding in the tomb, a small, domed building, could easily defend against an army.

Abu George was ordered to proceed with his men, raid Nebi Haida and arrest anyone found there, or in the vicinity. He was joined by Cohen, a Jewish Assistant Superintendent of Police, and one of the cleverest of the local officers in the Force. The going was terrible, Cohen slipped and clattered amongst the rocks as the party toiled up the mountainside on foot. Just before dawn, the perspiring, exhausted men reached the tomb, and one Arab constable, casting discretion to the winds, rammed a cartridge into the breech, and dashed down the flight of stairs into the sepulchre chamber. Once in the pitchy blackness his nerve deserted him, he was roaring like a bull, and, in his panic almost shot Abu George as he reached his side and clapped one enormous hand over the man's mouth. A blank—the brigands had fled—but several piles of bedding on the floor, still warm from the fugitives' bodies, showed how narrow had been their escape.

The nearest Druze village was Beit Jann, and towards it pressed Abu George and his men, marching through the fog that was beginning to envelop the boulder-strewn mountainside. Along one of the cultivated terraces leading into the village they advanced in open order, only to drop instantly to earth as a volley of bullets tore the air above their heads. Concealed in the mist Abu George held his fire and decided to crawl forward to investigate. Luckily he was right, as he more than half suspected—it was Sinclair and his party who had fired the shots—after a herdsman who had made his escape from the village as the police and Gendarmerie surrounded it. For the next few hours Beit Jann was subjected to the full rigour of police investigation—in the time-honoured Ottoman fashion—to which the alleged refinements of

## CAPTURE OF THE DRUZE

American third degree methods are as mild as milk-and-water. With the District Commandant himself looking on, many of the men, most of them in fact, were flogged with the terrible hide *kurbaje*, in an effort to make them talk and betray the fugitives who had fired on the High Commissioner's escort. One and all the Druze stood loyal to the age-old tradition of their fighting race. Even under the severest of handling they refused to say one word that would betray their brothers-in-blood. One and all kept silence, and when, at long last, it became obvious that even the threat of death itself would not make the men talk, another search of the village was undertaken. One "wanted" man, Mahmud Amaishi, was found in bed, disguised to look like an aged and infirm woman, a second, Said Lebnani, was found hiding down a well.

Abu George, more than a little disgusted with what he had seen done on the people of his area, was sent back to Rameh with the two prisoners, several of the notables of Beit Jann, and most of the men who had been so mercilessly flogged. Next day the whole party of prisoners were taken on to Acre, over 26 kilometres—on foot and chained together. Some three days later the two arrested men were again questioned in the presence of many senior Government officials. At first they maintained a dogged silence but the *bastinado* was put into operation; their feet placed through the slings of a rifle, they were then thrown on to their backs, and their feet raised, whereupon they were beaten upon the soles with a thick cane, until, in their agony, they were constrained to open their mouths. They told the whole story—they were well-known bandits who had crossed the frontier from Syria under the chieftainship of a notorious outlaw, a

Druze warrior named Mahmoud Rifani, they were wanted for crimes in Syria, but they had not been present when the British constables were killed near Metullah.

They were handed over to the Syrian authorities, and two of the Druze who had actually taken part in the ambush, Hamdi Abdel Khadr and Kassim Fhitar, both of Rashayeh village, were surrendered to the British authorities. They were brought to trial and sentenced to death ; Hamdi was hanged in Acre prison but Kassim on account of his extreme youth was reprieved. The Druze themselves were most indignant at the attack and the death of the British constables, an indignation that was most clearly shown on the day before the execution of Hamdi.

The condemned man had asked for the spiritual ministrations of Sheikh Taif, the religious head of the Palestinian Druze. The sheikh failed to come and the man then asked for a Moslem cleric to attend him. Whilst the Moslem sheikh was in the cell with Hamdi, Sheikh Taif appeared and was shown into Abu George's office, where he took coffee and obtained permission to see the condemned. He had agreed to take the body after the execution, when, at this moment, Sheikh Salman, a very powerful fighting chief of the Druze, from Abu Sinan village, marched in and asked Sheikh Taif what he was doing in Acre. Taif replied that he had come to do what he could for the Druze who was to be hanged in the morning, whereupon the warrior sheikh waxed very indignant.

“ What Druze is to be hanged in the morning ? There is no man of our people to die here.”

“ Yes, Your Presence Sheikh Salman, Hamdi is to die,” replied Taif.

## CHIEFTAINS OF THE DRUZE

"If there is a man to be executed here in this place of shame, he is no Druze, no man of our people," snorted the old sheikh. "Any man who committed such a crime has cut himself off from any consideration that he might have enjoyed."

The religious head stayed silent, quietly watching his militant brother.

"You do not wish to see this man, do you, Sheikh Taif?" asked Salman.

"I do not," answered Taif; both paid their respects to Abu George and stalked majestically away. The body of Hamdi was thereupon buried at the public charge by the Municipality of Acre, as the Druze refused to take it.

Sheikh Salman is one of the most powerful of all the chieftains under the British mandate. He is the son of a very clever old Druze, one Saleh Yussef, who, strangely enough was not one of the *Akel*, "the Enlightened," or Initiated, the inner circle of the mysterious Druze religion, but merely a *Jahel*, one of the common herd, or the "Ignorant." He was a great Freemason, leader of one of the most ancient lodges in the world. He discarded the traditional dress of the Druze and wore European garments and the *tarbush* with cords, instead of the distinctive cordless Druze headgear and white turban. But his three sons, Yussef, Selim and Salman were, all three, of the *Akel*, and dressed accordingly.

Yussef was responsible for all matters religious, Selim for internal arrangements and the all-important duty of entertaining distinguished guests, whilst Salman has the most important duty of all, the charge of external matters, of dealing with Government officials, and arranging any outstanding affairs affecting the Druze community.

A few days later, Abu George was leaving his house

in the early morning, to go to his office, when he was stopped by the voice of a veiled woman crouching in the dust of the roadway. "Abu George," she called, "I have something for you, come and take it."

He was very wary, and carefully slid his hand into his pocket and grasped the .38 Colts pistol that he carried there. There were too many people who owed him a grudge, including several who considered themselves to be at blood-feud with him, owing to his having either arrested men who had been subsequently hanged, or else because he had been detailed as the actual executioner.

"What want you of me, woman?" he asked.

"Come closer, O great fool of a man that fears a simple maid," she gibed, turning her head and glancing each way to see that the road was deserted at that early hour. "Here take this," and she threw a packet towards him. "And she, to whom you gave it, bids you meet her at the northernmost arch of the great aqueduct that the Romans built of ancient time, at moonrise on the third night from now. Come if you would hear news of him whom you and your men seek, the great outlaw Dahr el Fain."

"Who are you, woman?" demanded Abu George. "Lift thy veil, and let me see who brings me this message."

"That were shame, O despoiler of many women," answered the shrouded, dusty figure, with a merry chuckle in her voice. "When you get to your office, open and examine the packet I have given you, and you will see that my message means well to you. Now go, ere some ill-nurtured person sees me talking with you."

When he examined the packet he found it to contain the Field Dressing bandage that he had wrapped around the ankle of Lateefa many weeks before. If she could

give him any information about Dahr el Fain, it would be more than well worth while meeting her, for he had been a great thorn in the side of the Administration ever since the conquest of the Holy Land. A bandit, a murderer who had been condemned to death in default in both Palestine and Syria, a proscribed outlaw and a dangerous "killer," he was one of the first men that Abu George wished to eliminate if ever his district was to have a chance to grow peaceful.

On the third night Abu George was at the rendezvous, under the great arches of the aqueduct that supplies Acre with the fresh water from Ain Kabri, and as the moon cleared the saddle-back hill over Mejdal Kerum, he saw a figure dart from the bushes on the knoll beside him. Suspecting an ambush he drew his revolver and softly cocked the hammer.

"I see you," he said quietly in Arabic. "If you be a friend come out into the open, fearing nothing, but if you are an enemy know that I am armed."

"Foolish one," said a girl's voice. "'Tis I, Lateefa, whom you did help."

He had not expected that she would keep the tryst, it was almost unbelievable that an Arab girl would agree to meet a man in a remote spot in the darkness, without bringing any companion with her. He still did not trust her, it was only too likely that she would be acting as a decoy for the men of her tribe, to draw him into an ambush. But he heard her speaking.

"I know what thou art thinking, Abu George, that it is unseemly for a maid of the Arab to meet you under these circumstances and that you fear treachery. But trust Lateefa, she will not be false to the man who showed her kindness and who sought no reward for his goodness."

“ I did nothing to earn your gratitude,” answered the officer ; “ it was merely what any other man in my place would have done.”

“ Was that all ? ” she replied, a faint tone of disappointment in her voice. “ *Aieee*, I believe that you speak truth, and that which you did for me you would have done for any other maid.”

“ True,” he answered, “ or for any man whom I found injured.”

“ Art very dense and heavy of understanding, Abu George,” she replied.

Puzzled, he kept silence, and listened for her next words.

“ Aye, you did what you would have done for anyone else, even for a man,” a short pause, then, quick and fierce, “ but I will do for you what I would do for no one else.”

“ Lord,” thought Abu George, “ I hope that she is not going to start an effort at romance,” but her next words undeceived him.

“ This Dahr el Fain is a great cause of trouble to our people, and causes us much misery. Like many other men of his kind, he comes to us of the Aramshi and demands food, clothing, money and shelter, and we, knowing that he may slay some of us, are forced to give it to him. We should do so in any case, for is there not the ancient law of hospitality, and we desire to assist those sons of the Faith who are harried by your Infidel Government. But the men of the plains, and the villages in the foothills, grow weary of him, for are not you and your men always at their doors, beating and abusing them greatly, because they will not give him up to your justice. Now, if you are willing, I can arrange through certain

men, that Dahr el Fain will come into Acre and surrender himself. He is agreeable to do this if the penalty of death, under which he lies, is not inflicted upon him, for he grows weary of being hunted, and the people grow tired of sheltering him, and suffering for so doing. Give me your promise that he shall not be executed, and he will come in and surrender."

"That is beyond my power, Lateefa," replied Abu George, "for it is a sentence of the *Mekhemeh*, of the Court, and only they who sit in power in Jerusalem can give this promise. I will communicate with them and let you know if the promise can be given. How shall I send word to you?"

"You must send no word to me, neither must you let anyone know that you have met me, or else I shall be killed as are all who are suspected of giving information to the police. I will tell thee what to do. Next Friday I will come into the city of Acre to the market, that is four days from to-night, and, if you have the promise, you will hoist a flag on the pole over the great central tower of the castle in which you have your prison. I shall see and convey word to the proper quarter, and, within a week after that, Dahr el Fain shall come in and make his surrender to you."

"Why do you do this thing for me, Lateefa?" he asked. "You know what trouble I have had over Dahr, and, if I can make him surrender I shall gain great praise from my superiors."

"Maybe for one of many reasons, Abu George Effendi," she replied. "Perhaps because I am sorry for the people of the plains and foothills who suffer under your inquiries, perhaps because I am wishful to get rid of this ranting bully, Dahr el Fain, who puts my people of the Aramshi

to shame ; again, perhaps, I have a hatred against him. Maybe I wish to see justice done, or, maybe, Abu George, because although your eyes are of the Evil One, still are they those of a little boy,” and with a laugh she ran towards the bushes, calling back a few minutes later, “ Forget not the flag.”

On the Friday the flag was flying all day over the Keep of Acre, for Jerusalem had promised that the case of Dahr would be reviewed if he made surrender and came in himself, and this seemed sufficient for Abu George to carry out Lateefa’s desire. He hardly believed that the girl would be able to induce the outlaw to make a free submission, but, he reflected, there must be something in what she had promised.

On the fifth day Abu George got news of a great cache of contraband tobacco at Maalia village, a cache for which I myself had been searching diligently for some weeks, and he decided to go there and capture it and reap the certain reward. He managed to locate it and slept the night in the village, but on the day that he left, Dahr el Fain strode into Acre, leaving his arms hidden in a cactus thicket on the outskirts of the city. He went to the police barracks, knocked at the door and asked for Abu George. When told that the British officer was away he requested to see the native officer in charge. The latter was in a very bad mood that morning, for the previous night his wife had been delivered of a child, and for the fourth time in succession, it had been a daughter. He was looking for someone or something on which to vent his spleen, and the unfortunate outlaw was the first available subject for this most necessary operation.

“ Who are you and what do you want ? ” snarled the officer. “ Do you think that I have nothing better to

do than sit and listen to every flea-ridden Bedouin that cares to come strolling into the office ? ”

“ *Effendi*, ” replied Dahr, “ did not Abu George Bey tell you that I should come in to him ? ”

“ And who the blazes are you, that Abu George Bey should take any heed as to whether you came to see him or not ? ”

“ I am Dahr el Fain, ” replied the outlaw.

The officer gasped, gulped twice, and then reached for his riding-crop. “ Get out of my office, evil-smelling spawn of a loose mother. Do you think yourself humorous that you should try and play such a joke on me ? Ho, there ! Sergeant Abid, take this vile imitation of a man and throw him into the street, I want no practical jokers here. ”

And it was even so. The outlaw was expelled with considerable force from the police barracks. Shrugging his shoulders resignedly he went down the city and sat all morning in a coffee-house playing backgammon with some peasants from the villages around Shefr Amer. In mid-afternoon he decided to make another attempt to surrender himself and again went up to the police barracks, where he saw a very bored Kurdish corporal of mounted police, sitting yawning in the passage. He asked if Abu George had returned, and when told that he had not, asked to see the native officer.

As the corporal was taking him in, old Sergeant Abid happened to come out into the passage and saw the outlaw again. Agitatedly he rushed up to him, and thrust his clenched fist under the man’s beard.

“ O Son of Filth, and are you back again ? Take him away, Corporal Mahmud, and beat him well. He forced his way into Ibrahim Bey’s room this morning and tried

to tell him that he was the great *Khabudiy*, the hero, Dahr el Fain, and that he wanted to surrender. He said that he made arrangements with our lord Abu George to give himself up. Would not Abu George have told us if such a thing was likely to come to pass ? ”

“ Ho, ho,” roared the corporal, “ such an object as this to tell us that he is Dahr. Get out, dog ! Begone, fool ! And do not come bothering us any more or I will put my *kurbaj* around thy shoulders,” and forthwith pushed him out of the barracks.

Dahr returned to the coffee-house, and, as the evening drew on, went to a small hotel near to the Bazaar of the Coppersmiths, and turned in for the night, hoping that Abu George would return on the morrow.

The officer came back just before midnight, and, whilst questioning Corporal Mahmud, who was orderly N.C.O. for the night, he was told, as a great joke, the story of how a man had come in said that he was Dahr el Fain and that he wanted to surrender. Abu George’s language was lurid, he had told none of his native staff the story of how he had arranged for the outlaw’s surrender, firstly because he did not want to betray Lateefa’s part in it, and secondly, because he hardly believed that it would ever happen.

He asked the corporal where the man now was. The worthy man did not know, but a trooper said that he had seen him going into the hotel of Umm Nassif, and that he might be there. Taking two men with him, fully armed, Abu George, tired and saddle-weary as he was, went straight to the hotel, and found Dahr sleeping in the great bedroom amongst some twenty other Arabs. Awakened by the clattering boots of the police, the sleepers all stirred and rapidly rose to their feet.

## THE BRIGAND SURRENDERS

"Which of you is Dahr el Fain?" he asked. One of them stepped forward, saluted, and said:

"*Alhamdulillah*, Abu George Bey, that thou hast come. Thanks be to the One, for I have been trying all day to surrender myself to your men, and they have driven me away from the doors of the *Qishli* each time I went there."

The scene next morning can be imagined when Abu George met his subordinates. Dahr was not hanged, he was retried and received a long term of imprisonment. This was round one in the dangerous game of clearing the border district of the outlaws who infested it, but it was by no means the last.

The next man in his list was a certain Kassim Nugheis, a man of the Aramshi, and a most desperate brigand and highway robber. He also had been sentenced in default, and was known to be a man who would shoot at the first sight of a police uniform. Abu George let it be known that he was in hot pursuit of this man, and that he wanted his arrest before anything else. The same tactics were pursued, life was made unbearable for anyone even remotely suspected of harbouring him. They were sent for to come into Acre to see Abu George, kept waiting for days at his office door, and then told to remain in the city in case he needed them again. The *kurbaj* was freely used in the surrounding villages, until at last, the peasants and Bedouin were as heartily sick of the very name of Kassim as they had been of that of Dahr.

About three weeks later Abu George was going home after a particularly hard day's work in his office and prison, and was met by his wife and children taking the air on the little stretch of sea-front between the breach in the city wall and his home. She had never learnt

English, and the language of his household was Italian, in which he had become very fluent. George and his sister spoke both languages equally well, Italian to their mother, and English to their father, whilst also speaking Arabic to the other children about them and to the servants.

“ There was a beggar woman at the door to-day, dear,” said his wife, “ she was a fortune-teller and she was really very good. Told me about all sorts of good fortune that was coming to us, and then she said that she had a message for you. She repeated it several times, and George here had it most clearly, for he speaks Arabic better than I do. What did the Arab woman say, George ? ”

“ She said to tell Daddy,” piped the manly, sturdy little chap, already more than a little like his father in appearance, “ that if he hoisted the flag, the person of the ankle-bandage will send in the man he seeks on the fourth day. What did she mean, Daddy ? ”

Next day the flag was duly hoisted. There was no need to telephone Jerusalem, for Abu George looked up the case file and found that Kassim was sentenced to eleven years in default ; there was no question of a death-sentence, native rumour notwithstanding.

On the third day there was a further message for him, handed in by a beggar, who said that a woman had given it to him, and told him that Abu George would give him ten piastres if he delivered it safely.

“ Abu George Effendi,” he read,

“ Kassim will not come into Acre, for he fears that he will be recognized, and that, if he has not got his arms, some people may attempt vengeance on him for what he

## KASSIM MAKES SUBMISSION

has done to them in the past. Therefore be at the house of the *mukhtar* in Fassuliah village on the second night from now, and he will come to you by night and surrender. All is arranged.

### "THE BANDAGED ONE."

Suffice it to say that Abu George went to the house designated, and, at about 3.30 a.m. he awoke suddenly, he was sleeping on the flat roof, to find the outlaw Kassim, standing beside his couch, fully armed, with filled bandoliers crossing each other on his chest, revolver and dagger in belt, and a loaded rifle in his hand.

"*Ahlan*, Kassim, welcome," said Abu George, feeling under the pillow for his pistol.

"No need for thy weapon, Abu George Effendi," said Kassim. "See, here I lay down my rifle and my belt," suiting the action to the words, "and, here, I pile my bandoliers. Witness that I surrender freely to you. Lord, what happens to me?"

"That remains to be seen, and is in the hands of the *Hakoumeh*, the Government," answered the officer, "but, I promise thee that thou shalt not hang, if thou hast not killed anyone since I made my promise to thee by hoisting my flag. Tell me, why hast thou surrendered?"

"You made things too difficult for me, *Effendi*. When I asked for food and shelter people refused me for fear of you and your men. Where I had received help for years it was denied me, for men feared you even more than they feared me. I was like a hunted gazelle on the hillsides, and had nowhere, except amongst my own people to hide. My kinsmen of the Aramshi also did not want me, as they fear that you will enter their territory in force and cause them trouble. Therefore they

counselled me to come in and surrender, so long as you promised me my life.”

“How was the matter arranged to let me know of your determination ? Was it through a man or through a woman that it was done,” asked the officer.

“That I do not know, *Effendi*,” replied the outlaw, “but the thing was seen to by the sheikh and he, doubtless, saw that the message reached you. But never would I have surrendered had it not been for a certain maid who spoke, as do our Bedouin women, through the curtain when the *mejliss*, the council of the men, sat in her father’s tent to decide what we should do. She said that it was shame for a man like me, who feared no one, to bring trouble upon a whole tribe because I was afraid of what might happen to my own skin. It was she who asked that if my life was promised me, would I agree to surrender. I did. What else could I do, in the face of the whole *mejliss* ? ”

“What is the name of the maiden ? ” asked Abu George.

The man shrugged his shoulders. “How should I know ? Are another man’s womenfolk aught to me ? Lateefa, I believe, is the name of the wench, the daughter of the sheikh’s only son.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ‘‘ST. JOHN OF ACRE’’

THE people of Acre are a peculiar race, due to the fact that, for centuries, the Imperial Ottoman Government used the city as a place of confinement for its political prisoners. They were confined to the city, in itself, in the days before modern high-explosives and long-range artillery, a fortress of considerable strength, and freely intermarried within the circle of prisoners, and with the indigenous population.

Prisoners from all the far-flung domains of the Turk spent their lives and left their bones within the walls—Egyptians, swarthy Algerians and Moors, blond Georgians and Circassians, negroes from the Sudan and the southern parts of Arabia, Greeks, Bulgars, Roumanians, Roumelians, Armenians, Serbs, Slavs, Bosnians and Persians have all left their mark on the modern *Accawis*, the citizens of the town. The result is as may be expected, you have the greatest nest of intriguers and sly trouble-makers that could be found anywhere in the world, and not a little of the trouble and strife that afflicts Mandated Palestine can be traced to the instigation of some man of Acre.

The city itself is a tumbled mass of crumbling fortifications, the ancient Crusader walls and bastions hopelessly intermingled with the nineteenth-century ramparts and their wide embrasures for cannon. Dominating all is the

renovated Castle of the Knights Hospitaller, rebuilt by Jezzar the Butcher to serve as the citadel of the fortress, with the cannon-balls of Admiral Stopford's bombardment still sticking, like currants in a pudding, into the sandstone curtain-walls. The grim Keep of the castle serves as a landmark for miles around, whilst the only approach to the bazaars, before two breaches were made in the northern ramparts, was the double right-angle of one landward gate.

Perhaps the strangest character in all of this queer city was the great *Sheikh ul Mushiyekh*, the Sheikh of Sheikhs, Assad el Shucair. In his way he was as outstanding a character as the Briton who held command over this city of Lion-Heart and Philip Augustus. He had been the chief Moslem chaplain to the infamous Djemaal Pasha, generalissimo of the Turkish Armies during the war, and had been notorious for his supposed severity in crushing all signs of Arab nationalism with gallows and fetter. Perhaps the secret of his policy lay in the very fact of his intense loyalty to the Sultan, whom he looked on as Caliph and Leader of the Faithful, and upon anyone struggling against him as a thrice-damned heretic. He was a source of intense anxiety to Abu George, as not only had all his movements to be instantly reported to Headquarters in Jerusalem, and an unobtrusive watch to be kept on his activities, but he was also reputed to be in danger of death from several hundred Arabs, all of whom looked upon him as having been instrumental in causing the execution of their relatives under the Turkish military régime. The blood-feud is very strong in the Holy Land, the greater percentage of the vast annual murder toll is directly attributable to this cause, and had the Sheikh of Sheikhs been slaughtered, there were plenty

## THE SHEIKH OF SHEIKHS

of political malcontents who would have raised the cry that the British Government was responsible, that it had got rid of one of its doughtiest opponents by a judicial murder.

Sheikh Assad is an extremely intelligent and clever man. He would never have held the continued regard and esteem of Djemaal Pasha had he not been ; the general was too great a hater of all things Arab to have tolerated any fool of that race being near him. He is brilliant in conversation, astute, and, potentially, had he so chosen, the greatest enemy that Britain could have had in the newly conquered Land of Outremer. He is old, very old, a picturesque and majestic figure, but a great deal of his potentiality for trouble had been sapped by a widespread rumour that he was more than a little friendly to the Zionists. He was a supporter of the Nashashibi faction in internal politics, and, although these Nationalists professed to ignore him as a back number, they still came to him in their difficulties, and writhed under his bitter tongue-lashings when he pointed out the faults and pusillanimity of their policy.

For many years he was content to play the part of a retired Elder Statesman, and Abu George found that, though he could not hope to compete with the brilliant mind of the old man, he could work on the Sheikh's personal feelings, and he picked up a great deal of most useful information regarding the underground rumblings that convulse Palestine.

The Sheikh of Sheikhs now seems to have returned to politics, and, judging from his recent utterances, has become definitely anti-British, playing a prominent part in the new party, "The Society of National Defence," an organization founded by the disgruntled Nashashibi

faction after their striking defeat in the 1934 Jerusalem Municipal elections. This party is most prominent for its hostility to the Husseinis, the reactionary faction of the Grand Mufti, of whom Sheikh Assad is most jealous, and to whom he is bitterly antagonistic.

Meanwhile war had broken out all along the slopes and valleys of the Lebanon and the Jebel Druze ; the fighting Druze challenged the whole armed might of France. North of Palestine's frontier, no one was safe, and pitched battles, sieges and skirmishes were the order of the day. This made Abu George's task of ridding his district of outlaws all the more difficult, as there are many thousands of Druze living within the confines of Palestine, only separated from their people in Syria by the highly artificial and arbitrary frontier imposed upon them after the War by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Besides the usual outlaws, all of whom were only too willing to make forays into the French territory, in the hope of seizing loot and arms, he had also a great influx of fugitive and wounded Druze coming into the villages south of the line to recuperate and re-arm before returning to have another smack at the hated *Franzawi*. The troubled state of Syria not only made his personal liaison with the French authorities most difficult, but rendered even more dangerous his cherished project of bringing the Aramshi to heel and teaching them some respect for law and order, a thing that had become all the more necessary because of several highway robberies and murders that occurred at this time.

Whilst a particularly brutal murder was puzzling him, he went to pay one of his usual courtesy calls on the Sheikh of Sheikhs, between whom and himself the most cordial relationship existed. The old man was deeply interested

in the outcome of the Druze war with the French, and was suspected to be giving more than a little help to the insurgents, although this was a matter that could not be definitely proved, and, of course, was taboo as a subject of conversation between Abu George and himself. After the usual exchange of courtesies, several cups of coffee and a liberal distribution of sugared almonds, the old sheikh, a brilliant raconteur, began to tell the officer what was, to him, an excruciatingly funny story of a recent affair in the Aramshi tribe.

"You know, Abu George Effendi," he began, "old Sheikh Mitghail Mugheis, him they call Abu Toban, of the Aramshi?"

Abu George replied that he did. "I know him, your Presence, a strange old man, hospitable, humorous, always in some scrape or another. Can tell a good story, but has seldom been known to tell the truth."

Sheikh Assad chuckled in his long beard. "That's the man. Well, the old fool has fallen in love again, this time with a young maid. You will not have noticed her, her name is Lateefa, the daughter of the sheikh's son."

"I'll wager that that old virago, Umm Toban, his wife, has had something to say about that," murmured Abu George. "It is rumoured in the camps that she beats her husband, and goes green with jealousy every time he even speaks to one of the girls of the tribe."

"She *does*," said Sheikh Assad, "and this time she was helped by the girl herself. It seems that Abu Toban fell head over heels in love with the maid, and was afraid either to approach her father or to mention it. He knew that the old sheikh would never consent to his granddaughter becoming a No. 2 wife, or that the girl herself would ever agree to be under old Umm Toban. At the same time

he was so frightened of his wife that he dared not mention it, or make any overtures for divorce, for, besides the old dame's strong right arm, his only son, Toban, has sworn to shoot him if he puts his mother away. So he temporized, and decided to try and win the girl's affection meanwhile, hoping that he would be able to get rid of Umm Toban by some means or another."

Abu George groaned. "That will be another murder case for me to deal with, I suppose. I'll have the old devil hanged if he poisons her."

"That is just where the shoe pinches," rejoined Sheikh Assad. "He is so scared of you that he dares not try anything of that sort. The old sheep has been getting in Lateefa's way and making longing eyes at her, only to be openly flouted. He went into Bint Jbeil, to the *Sukh el Kamis*, the Thursday market, sold a fine young Spanish ass, and with the proceeds bought sweets and silks for his innamorata, thinking that she would look more kindly upon him. He told the shopkeeper, as do so many love-lorn men, the reason for his purchases, and then went off to sleep before returning to the Aramshi. The next visitor to the shop was Lateefa herself, and the merchant told her what the old fool had done. She said nothing, but left immediately and returned to her people, where she got hold of Umm Toban and told her the story. Their son was also present, with his wife, and, together, they awaited the return of their lord and father from market.

"They do not live in tents like most of the Aramshi, but have a house right on top of one of the hills, from whence you can see the track for miles. Presently Abu Toban appeared, riding his horse ; but he had his *kombaz*, the long night-shirt-like garment, worn by all Arabs,

tucked up into his belt. The family party watched him dismount at the foot of the hill, and disappear behind a bush, from whence he reappeared with his *kombaz* let down, having disposed of whatever he was carrying in it. Toban, the son, went by another route, where he would not meet his father ascending the hill, and collected the sweets and silks that he had hidden. Lateefa made herself scarce. When the sheikh arrived at the house the usual greetings and congratulations on a safe return were exchanged. Toban came back and asked his father the reason for his having gone behind the bush. The old man was nonplussed for a moment, and then replied :

“ ‘ *Anna ruht, mittal el Naas, ya ibni.* To relieve nature, O my son.’

“ ‘ Then, how strange, O my father,’ replied Toban, ‘ that all I could find were these sweets and silks. Verily art thy bowels highly blessed.’

“ Collapse of the sheikh, but his wife immediately went into battle.

“ ‘ O dog and son of fifty generations of flea-bitten curs, O snake that I have warmed in my bosom,’ she screamed, ‘ is it thus that you would cast me aside ? I, that have borne your son ; I, that have made you great amongst our people ; I, to whom you owe all. Come, ye people, ye mothers of sons, see how wrongly my man would use me, and see how I treat this worm, this jackal I have cherished.’

“ By this time a collection of Aramshi women, attracted by her shouts, had gathered around, and snatching off her *surmiya*, her worn old shoe, she belaboured Abu Toban until he screamed and grovelled for mercy. ‘ Get up, you pitiful Thing,’ she yelled ; ‘ take these articles that you have bought for a girl who has too much sense

and pride to listen to the drivellings of a worn-out grey-beard like you. Take them, I say, and offer them to these good women who witness your shame.’ And the old man had to offer sweets to all the congregation ; the silks, canny old Umm Toban snatched out of his hands, saying, ‘I will take these and resell them to the shopkeeper, whom may Allah eternally destroy, and buy myself things that I need. Get you inside and I will deal with you at length later.’ ”

The Sheikh of Sheikhs by this time was almost convulsed with laughter. “And there you are, Abu George Effendi, that is the way your brave Aramshi are ruled. How is it that you always say that they are the great trouble-makers of this district ? ”

Abu George, from politeness, joined in what the old man evidently considered a gargantuan joke, and shortly afterwards took his departure. Thoughts were racing through his head.

“What a clever old devil Sheikh Assad is ! Trying to convince me that the Aramshi are harmless. I wonder if he suspects the help that Lateefa has given me ? Hardly, or he would not have mentioned her. Good, here is the chance for me to re-establish contact with her and get to these confounded people.”

He immediately sent off messengers to the tribe, commanding the instant attendance at his office of the sheikh, Lateefa his granddaughter, the whole Toban family and a number of the people who had witnessed the beating of Abu Toban. Three days later he returned their salutations as they stood grouped around the entrance to the Police Barracks. One by one he had them into his office, made a great display of taking down their statements, and warned Abu Toban that, if his wife died

suddenly of some mysterious illness, he would see that he suffered on the brand-new gallows inside the castle. Toban, the son, was warned not to attempt anything against his father, and his mother told not to put public shame upon an old man in such a manner, in case she provoked him to murder her. The sheikh of the Aramshi was warned that he should keep better order amongst his tribe and told that he would be deposed from his chieftainship if he dared to allow any more such scenes, advice that he took with a sneer.

"Before you dispose of me, *Effendi*, you must send your men, or come yourself to my land, and I have heard that the path is very difficult for those whom we do not want to see," he replied.

Abu George bit back an angry retort and then called for Lateefa, and, without making any reference to what had gone before, warned her to cease making trouble in the tribe. She looked at him in hurt amazement, which changed to a look of instant comprehension.

"I would see you on a matter of importance, Lateefa child, as soon as possible," he said hurriedly.

Without a change of countenance, she replied, "On the fifth night from now at the usual place, one half-hour after moonrise."

On the night mentioned he met her under the last arch of the aqueduct. She appeared from amongst the bushes in her customary stealthy fashion.

"I am come, Abu George Effendi, even as you commanded, though why I should trouble myself to do so is more than I can say," she said.

"I am glad, Lateefa," he answered, "for there is much I want to say to you."

"And I also am glad to come when my lord commands."

“ Then, maiden, there is much that you can do for me and for my Government,” he said.

“ For your Government I care nothing, but for you it is another matter. I will do anything that you require of me,” answered Lateefa.

He felt more than a little uneasy. It seemed that she did care for him personally, it was not just a public-spirited desire to rid her people of outlaws and trouble-makers. Rotten thing to use her like this, best put matters on an impersonal plane and affect to believe that she was moved by a wish to help her tribe.

“ Then that is good, Lateefa, for my Government and I are one in what needs doing,” replied Abu George. “ I want you to show me another road into the Aramshi land, other than that past the Khirbet, which even an army could not enter if the sheikh your grandfather refused passage.”

She hesitated for a few moments. “ This is no slight thing you ask from me, *Effendi*; it seems that you want me to betray my people.”

“ No, Lateefa, I don’t,” he replied. “ I swear to you that none of your people shall be imprisoned, or beaten, or cruelly used, but I have a murder case at Wadi Jaitum and I know that the murderer is hiding with your folk. He is an Egyptian and has not gone to the people of the plain, so that it is of no use my harrying them to force them to hand him over. He will slip north into Syria and escape unless I can lay my hands upon him, and I know that he has sufficient means to bribe the sheikh your grandfather to give him sanctuary. It is of no use asking you to get him to surrender as, having no ties amongst the surrounding people, he will not agree to come in. I cannot promise him immunity from the gallows, for he

## THE MAID SHOWS THE ROAD

must hang if I can but lay my hands upon him. Think, he is a foreigner and he has killed one of your countrymen. What claim has he upon you ? ”

“ But, *Effendi*, to show you the secret path into our territory were treachery,” she protested. “ I could not do that.”

“ Then, Lateefa,” he said grimly, “ I must try and make my way in the teeth of your grandfather’s riflemen up the track from the Khirbet. That means that many will die, probably I shall, as I must lead my men. Perhaps that counts little with you, but, if anything happens to my men and myself, then will my Government stamp flat your people. They already smart under the insult your tribe offered them when they beat the Governor ; they will allow you no second chance. Your defences may be strong, but can they stand against the *tiyarat*, the aeroplanes that need no road, and can bomb and machine-gun your tents and houses ? Think of the women and children that will suffer death and wounds if your people as much as kill one of my troopers. There will be no escape northwards, for my Government will arrange with the *Franzawi* to send a regiment to prevent any escape into their territory.”

She wrung her hands with all the abandon of Arab distress.

“ Why not say all this to my grandfather, *Effendi* ? Why ask a poor maid to betray the secret of her people ? ”

“ For many reasons, Lateefa. For two, above all. The first that, if I do so, your grandfather will warn the Egyptian to escape, and my Government will go to no trouble to effect the arrest of a single criminal, and I must have him if I am ever to make peace and living safe in this my district. Secondly, because even if I tell your grandfather, and he sees my point, still will the younger men

demand to make a stand against me, and then, forcing the road, the disaster we both fear will fall upon your people.”

“ Then I will tell you the way, *Effendi*,” she replied, and gave long and most complicated details of the ancient smugglers’ road that ran from Bassa village, a native Christian township, over the Ladder of Tyre hills and traversed the foothills. “ But, I beg thee, *Effendi*, let no one know that I have told you, or else, sheikh’s daughter though I be, it will be my murder that you will be investigating next.”

He thanked her, and knowing how unsafe it was to meet her at all, urged her to return with all possible speed.

“ But, one thing, O man with the eyes of a boy,” she asked. “ Are you of the *Ingliz* like these Infidel dogs of *Nazranis*, seeing that you are both of the same religion, and allowed to have but one wife ? ”

“ The *Nazranis* and ourselves are bound by the same law,” he answered.

“ Thou art legally married, Abu George, to she who lives with thee and is the mother of thy children ? ”

“ I am, Lateefa,” he answered.

She sobbed, “ Then are you allowed to divorce your wives if you wish to remarry ? ”

“ We may set our wives aside for just and proper cause,” he answered.

She smiled again, although he could see a big tear in each of her large eyes.

“ There, I am foolish to ask such questions, for never would one of the great ones, one of those set in authority, look with kindness on an Arab maid,” she replied. “ It is presumptuous in me to think that my lord regards me with favour, but still, for that which lies in your eyes,

## THE MURDERED MULETEER

though your face is so fierce and grim, will I help thee, Abu George. If you need more help from Lateefa, I pray thee leave a red-coloured garment hanging by itself in the place where your wife dries your washing, and, the second day after you have displayed it, come to this spot, and I will do all that I may to aid you. At least I will bring peace to my people," and with that she was gone into the bushes.

The case with which Abu George was engaged had been a particularly brutal one, if any differentiation can be made between such events, and exactly the type of thing that he had sworn to stamp out. A corpse had been discovered by a mounted constable in the Wadi Jaitum, a water-course some ten miles north of Acre. Abu George went there immediately and found the body lying half in and half out, of the flowing brook, in a state that loudly advertised that five or six days had passed since the crime had been committed. Death had been caused by several violent blows on the head. Disgusting as the task was, owing to decomposition, he stripped the corpse and removed the clothing so that they might be kept for identification, the first and most necessary step in order to establish the guilt of the murderer. The only one of his men that he could find to stand the unpleasant task was Trooper Moharsim Karsim, a sturdy, callous Druze.

A close search revealed a twisted-up spill of paper in the waistcoat pocket, which the dead man, like all the *fellahin* of Palestine, had worn. The paper was carefully opened and dried in the sun, and proved to be a quarantine ticket made out in the name of Abdul Rahman Abbas and dealt with the passage of a mule through the quarantine camp at the frontier. Abu George

immediately recalled a case that had been reported, a certain Egyptian having been found four days previously in possession of a mule for whose ownership he could not account. He immediately telephoned to Haifa to have the man sent over to him, proposing to deal with him on a charge of not having a valid passport entitling him to be in Palestine, always a safe course to take with vagabond Egyptians.

Search in the *sugs* of Haifa failed to produce the man, who had left the mule in the hands of the police and decamped. Later information told the police officer that the man had again passed through his area and had taken refuge with the Aramshi, preparatory to making his departure across the frontier. This, of course, absolutely determined him to arrest the man, and at the same time to so intimidate the Aramshi that they would cease harbouring “wanted” fugitives. The mule was sent to Acre. The relatives of the murdered man, brought from their village, immediately identified it, although they were asked to pick it out from a score of the animals. They said that Abdul Rahman had left his village, Bint Jbeil, with an Egyptian who had hired him and his beast for ten *mejidies*, a Turkish silver coin then still current amongst the peasants, to go with him to Haifa. Five *mejidies* were paid on the spot to the wife, and the other five Abu George had discovered on the body. This left him with no doubt in his mind that the fugitive Egyptian was the murderer.

The midnight after his interview with Lateefa, Abu George mustered his troopers and rode for Bassa. He had carefully noted in his pocket-book the description of the route given him by the girl, and, after a little searching, found the road he wanted. With the first

## VICTORY OVER THE ARAMSHI

crack of dawn, he found himself on the high plateau that formed the territory of the Aramshi, and drew a cordon of rifles around the huddle of stone houses, branch and leave *arishis*, and long black tents that formed the settlement of the sheikh of the erring tribe.

Before the cordon was complete the continual yapping of the curs warned the Bedouin that something was amiss, and they came streaming out of their dwellings to find a ring of grim-faced troopers, their fingers itching on the triggers of their rifles. Abu George rode up to the largest house and asked for the sheikh to come and meet him. As the old man came out, long curved sword slapping against his leather riding-boots, he made the gesture of peace and salutation.

"*Mahaba, meet mahaba, ya Hadrat el Beyk.* A hundred welcomes, my Lord Bey," he said. "I am happy to see you in my home, though *Shaitan* himself must have guided you," and he looked around the ring of troopers to see what traitor had brought the police to his sanctuary. "My poor house is yours to command. *Fadel*, be welcome, alight from your horse, and order whatever you have a mind to that your servant can produce."

"*Mahabatain, ya Hadrat el Sheikh, Feek.* And welcome it is to see you," replied Abu George, throwing his reins to his orderly, "though it is ill-mannered of you to suggest that it is the Father of all Evil who has given me the great joy of seeing you, my father, in your own home. Rather is it a kindly Spirit who has given me this privilege. I knew that you had your young men to bid me welcome in the Pass above the Khirbet, but, as I did not want to disturb them, I came by another route."

The old man was hard put to it to hide his chagrin, but,

murmuring the conventional platitudes of hospitality, stood aside to bid the officer enter. Kicking off his heavy boots, and leaving them at the door, Abu George stalked in, and took his place on the cushions hurriedly laid for him. In the course of the morning, he chatted with every man of the tribe, and, within half an hour, the Egyptian criminal was discovered and brought before him. He was duly handcuffed, green with fear and the impending shadow of death, and handed over to the custody of the troopers. The usual feast was held, and, after a few hours' sleep, was eaten by the police party, as courteous in the terms they used as their unwilling host, and then the cavalcade mounted and prepared to depart.

In his saddle, Abu George turned to make his farewells.

“ I thank you, men of the Aramshi, for your hospitality and courtesy, and I now return by the Pass near the Khirbet. Let there be no more talk of hostility between us now that we have eaten of your bounty. Let there be friendship amongst us, and I will send you my troopers once per week, or as often as I can spare them, so that good relationships will be set up between us, who are your guardians, and your good selves. I will also visit you frequently, and I shall come by the route of the Pass, none trying to withstand me. This I shall do so that I may see that no evil, wicked ones shall come and live amongst you, greatly against your wills, and force you to defend them as guests against me. *Bikhartirkhum, ya Akhwan*. O Brothers, give me your permissions to depart.”

“ *Mar Salaami, ya Abu George Beyk*. Go with Peace, Lord Abu George,” they murmured, outfaced.

“ *Wa Allah Salamkhum*. May God grant you all His Peace,” piously replied, as convention demanded, Abu

George, a glint of mockery in his eyes. Round Number Three for the pacification of the Border country was his.

Returned to Acre, he set about the business of proving the guilt of the murderer. He was placed amongst forty other men of his own rank and station, and was immediately identified by all the relatives of the dead muleteer. Although he was dressed in different clothes to those in which he had been arrested, they had had no difficulty in recognizing him. He was found to have several scratches on his face and body, probably caused during the struggle that had culminated in the murder, but he protested that they had been caused by a *loofah* whilst bathing, and stoutly maintained his innocence, and ignorance of everything concerned with the murder. Nothing could be got out of him, and he remained completely stoical in the face of all treatment. Abu George then decided to take him out to the Wadi, where he had buried the corpse after the clothing had been removed. He was taken there and the officer set him to work, with pick and shovel, to exhume the murdered man. For some time he worked away stolidly. The climax arrived when he came across the head of the body—perspiration streamed down his face and he collapsed in terror, but he stolidly refused any confession. Later, brought to trial, he was convicted—his appeal against the death-sentence was dismissed—and he paid the penalty on Abu George's new gallows.

On the day following his return from the Aramshi with the Egyptian, Abu George was horrified to find that his pet project, the Acre-Ras el Nakourah road, was being interfered with by the wily peasants from Zib village. They would sally forth after dark, dig a large hole right across the new highway, fill it with wet earth, and then sit

patiently until a motor-car came along and became hopelessly bogged, whereupon they charged a fat fee to haul it out. This was very much akin to sacrilege in his view—that a miserable peasant should dare to lay a profaning finger on *his* road—and, seeing a blood-red mist before his eyes, he stamped into Zib village and demanded vengeance. He got it—six leading road-diggers became the unpaid servants of the Palestine Government in nice little striped suits.

Meanwhile he found that his liaison with M. Pincot and the other Syrian authorities began to improve, with the receding of the tide of war from his especial part of the frontier, and the usual exchange, entirely unofficial, of prisoners started again in full operation. This immediately put a stop to the extensive white-slave traffic, by which girls were taken from Palestine to the stews of Beirut and Damascus, and also seriously hampered the caravans of contraband arms, drugs and tobacco, especially that he had now forced the Aramshi into being unwilling allies.

A smart skirmish with a large armed gang of Mettwalis north of Tershiha had to be broken off in the falling darkness. In the dark and rain, all trace of the enemy was lost on the steep, wooded mountain-side. Abu George followed their tracks as far as Deir el Kasi, where he found a pile of empty cartridge-cases, evidently those that the brigands had salvaged from their action with him, and then abandoned in the hurry of their flight. He followed them into Syria as far as Ain Ibl and Bint Jbeil, from which the murdered man in the recent case had hailed, but made no further contact with them. On the road they encountered two troopers of the Syrian Gendarmerie, who, knowing him and the intimacy which

## ATTACK BY METT WALI RAIDERS

he enjoyed with their chiefs, obligingly rode past with averted faces so as to be able to say later that they had not seen him. The brigands disappeared across the border and did not re-enter Palestine, evidently scared off by finding that Abu George was quite as bad as report had said he was, though evidence was collected that their leader had been a notorious and warlike chieftain, Sadek Bey Hamzi. A telephone message to M. Pincot ensured a column of Syrian Gendarmerie being sent in pursuit. Later it was discovered that they had come to Palestine on a mission of personal vengeance, to pay a debt that Sadek Bey had fancied he held against a man of Julis. Luckily this man was away when the robbers entered the village. The gang managed to escape the French net, and, months later, Sadek Bey was killed in the Hedjaz, fighting against the invading Wahabis, in the service of the Sherifian King Hussein.

The relationship with the Aramshi was further improved by the release of a certain Ghaleb Taher, a famous brigand, serving a long sentence, a member of that tribe. His health became so bad whilst he was in prison that he was released on compassionate grounds, and, although this was a completely routine affair, the tribesmen looked upon it as one more proof that Abu George was willing to help them, if they would refrain from molesting him.

So great was their willingness to assist him that it became embarrassing. One day Abu George went to Haifa, to make an elaborate plan with an Arab of Horfeit, named Hassan Fares, to secure the arrest of five outlaws who had been condemned to death in default. The telephone suddenly rang and, when he answered it, he found that it was from his wife, who appeared to be very agitated. She protested in most voluble Italian :

“ My dear, I have always been against you following the dangerous trade of a police officer, and now you must give it up at once.”

In an amazed voice, wondering what was wrong, he asked her if she had suddenly gone insane to ring him up at such a time.

“ Insane ! Of course I am insane,” she answered. “ What woman would not be insane if she was faced with what I am this day ? I tell you that I cannot stand it. I won’t stand it ! ”

“ Whatever is the matter ? ” he asked.

“ Matter—what is the matter he asks me ? ” she went on. “ If you do not care for me, at least you might take some thought for the lives of your own son and daughter. This is terrible, most terrible.”

“ What is terrible ? ” he shouted.

“ This ! ” she answered. “ Here am I with your two children crying at my heels. Listen, and you will hear them,” and she raised one terror-stricken mite to the mouthpiece, a pause, then the other one was also lifted. “ Now, maybe, your iron heart will melt when you hear the terror of your own offspring.”

“ Woman, *what is wrong* ? ” bawled the exasperated man.

“ Wrong ! Oh, nothing is wrong,” she screamed ; “ nothing at all. Of course not, that is why I am making all this trouble. That is why I have rung you up at the cost of much of my housekeeping money.”

Abu George at the other end dashed his hand across his perspiring forehead. “ Tell me, quickly, dearest one, darling one, angel, anything you like to be, but tell me, *tell me*.”

“ Nothing,” she sniffed, whilst he could still hear the whimpers of the children. “ Nothing, it is nothing that

## HIS HOUSE INVADED

I, a lone woman of Italy, amongst you English barbarians and Arab savages, should be left to suffer an awful death. The house is full of your wild Arab friends, all armed with swords and daggers, men from the hills, not townsmen, and in their midst they have five other men, whom they say have been condemned to die by your forever-to-be-condemned Government. And they wish to keep them here until you return."

Abu George gasped. "Tell them to go to the Police Barracks. I am returning at once."

"They refuse to do so, and say that they will only give them up to you," she answered. "Oh, *do* something, can't you?"

"Telephone the barracks and tell them to send you some men at once to take them away," he replied.

"Fool, do you think that I did not do that at once?" she answered. "The police came, and now your Arab friends have closed all the windows and barricaded the doors, and say that they will fight if the troopers try to force an entry."

"Then bring the leader of the Arabs to the 'phone and let me speak to him."

He heard a long-drawn argument going on between his wife and a man, and then a diffident voice spoke to him in Arabic.

"*Effendi*, the lady has bid me speak into this evil black hole and tells me that I shall hear your voice. I do not believe her, for truly all women are liars, but I am making a pretence of doing so, so that I shall not offend her who is your wife and the mother of your noble son, George. Dost hear me, *Effendi*?"

He recognized the voice. "Is it you, Kassim Mahmud of the Aramshi?"

“ Yes, my lord the Bey, but how you manage to know that, unless you can see me as well as hear me, I know not. This is evidently the accursed magic of the Infidels.”

“ Then listen. Who are these men whom you have brought to my house and why have you taken them there and not to the barracks ? ”

“ We brought them here because we wished to give them to you and not to your men, who might treat them harshly in your absence, for we have given them our promise that they shall not be beaten or hardly used, and we trust no policeman other than your noble self. Therefore we brought them here, expecting to find you. What do you wish that we should do now ? ”

“ Give them up to the police officer outside at once,” he ordered.

“ Nay, lord, that we may not do, for that would be shame when we have promised to surrender them to no man but you. They would not have agreed to come else. They must wait for you.”

“ Then allow the officer in charge of the police to come and speak to me, and let him take out my wife and family so that they may not be harmed if fighting commences.”

“ But, lord,” answered a hurt voice, “ are they not under our protection and can any harm befall them ? Moreover, certain of the five wish to keep them here as hostages for themselves.”

“ I know, O Kassim my brother, but women are foolish and timorous creatures, our Frankish ones even more so than the females of your own brave race. Moreover,” he lied, “ I believe she bears another child, which may Allah grant be a son, and I am afraid that harm may befall her should she be affrighted.”

“ That alters the matter, *Effendi*. Therefore will I

‘ ‘ F O R   H E   D R I V E T H   F U R I O U S L Y ’ ’

send her and her girl-child out ; but my men will not agree that the boy George, who, we know, is as your heart, shall go with her.”

“ Kassim, think you that the mother will go without her child ? Do this thing for my sake and I will always cherish you as a brother, and I give you my *kalam sharrif*, my word of honour that no ill shall befall you. Now let me speak to the officer.”

A few minutes of delay in which he had to listen to further reproaches from his wife, and then he was put through to the native officer, to whom he gave instructions to take his family out as quietly as possible, and then to draw a cordon around the house, but on no account to interfere with the Aramshi or their prisoners.

As soon as he knew they were out, he sought about for the quickest way of getting back to Acre. There was no longer any reason to carry on with his plan, for the wanted men were already in the net.

As he came out of the office he ran straight into the arms of Peter Noble, the District Engineer.

“ Good man, I knew you were here,” said the D.E. “ I am just on my way to your place, to see how those prisoners of yours are getting on with the road.”

In a few words Abu George outlined the situation and begged Noble to get him to Acre as quickly as possible. Now a ride with the D.E. was a thing that strong men blenched from in terror, for, of all drivers, he was the nearest approach to Jehu, the son of Nimshi. On a recent occasion H.R.H. Prince Nicholas of Roumania had been driven by him from the prison camp, where he had stopped for lunch, back to Haifa, and had described the journey as one that he would never forget.

Outside the barracks was the D.E.’s Buick, with Mrs.

Noble sitting in the back, surrounded by several brown paper parcels. Out of Haifa they dashed at express speed, across the level-crossings and on to the beach. The long crescent of golden sand between Haifa and Acre is, generally, as firm and as suitable for racing as is Daytona in Florida, but if there has been a storm, it becomes dangerous, for long promontories of soft sand drift across the hard-packed surface near the water-line, and afford a considerable hazard to anyone driving at speed. Added to this the River Kishon crosses the beach at a spot two miles from Haifa, and affords an extra peril. This can be avoided by a detour through soft sand and across an old pontoon bridge, but it can generally be safely crossed at its mouth by the sand bar, across which there are often only a couple of inches of water. But one has always to dismount and make certain, as, if there is a freshet in the hills of Galilee, or on the heights of Carmel's hog-back, this bar sometimes, temporarily, deepens to anything up to six feet.

Along the shore fled the Buick, Abu George sitting beside the crouched figure of Noble, who feverishly gripped the wheel. Past the danger-board marking the detour over the Kishon bridge, where, nowadays, stands the explosives magazine, they fled, touching seventy. The officer howled to the driver :

“ Pull up whilst I look at the river ? ”

“ Still, damn you, sit still,” roared the D.E. Abu George cast a glance into the back seats where Mrs. Noble hung on to the sides of the open car with a dour expression of determination on her face.

“ SPLAAASH ! ! ! ” They were through the Kishon. Praise to Allah, there had only been a couple of inches on the bar. Then their troubles commenced. The beach

was ridged across by the two-inch soft sand promontories. The car would check momentarily, lurch and sway giddily, shake itself and then hit firmer sand, and gather speed again. The speedometer needle soared and finally came to rest against the 120-kilometre mark, the highest point, against which it appeared to be firmly jammed. As the car lurched, the packages bumped from side to side, now against Mrs. Noble, now on the other side. Finally, a mile past the old Turkish outpost, pitted with the machine-gun bullets of the British destroyers who had "chivvied" the Turkish rearguard in the last days of the War, disaster finally overtook them. One of the promontories was too high and wide to allow the car to get through. Crazy it swayed, slithered, rolled, and, when Abu George recovered, he found himself in the sand, gently decanted from the car, as it tipped up on to its side.

His first thought was for Mrs. Noble, but she was already on her feet, and had commenced giving her opinion of her husband, and his capabilities as a chauffeur.

"Come on," said that worthy, "no time to waste. Let's get the old bus pushed back on to her wheels." They did so and to everyone's relief found that she would still go.

"Come on, man, get those parcels in. We've no time to waste!" roared Noble.

Feverishly Abu George collected them, and as he scrambled aboard said:

"You seem to have brought an awful lot of lunch, Peter. You must be going to have a feast with Freddie Miller," referring to the officer who had taken over charge of the road camp.

"Don't be an ass. That's not lunch. Dynamite and

detonators for your confounded prisoners' quarry," he snapped, and let in the clutch.

Fortunately there was no further incident, although their speed was much as before. The narrow bridge over the Belus was safely negotiated on two wheels, and with a scream of brakes, Noble drew up outside Abu George's front door on the water-front north of the walls.

Abu George was quite relieved when he found that he only had five condemned murderers to deal with. It seemed so safe after that ride on top of the explosives.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### “PEACE ON THE BORDERLAND”

THERE was little anti-Zionist feeling in Acre District, it was too remote from the then centres of Jewish colonization, and the population was far too mixed for the professional trouble-makers from the cities to hope for much success if they attempted a propaganda campaign. But there were older and more deep-seated hatreds. The Druze had not forgotten the days of sixty-odd years before when they had hunted the Christians up and down the screees of Lebanon, and helped in the massacres of Western monks and native Christians in the bazaars of Damascus. But neither had they forgotten the terrible vengeance meted out to them by the troops of Napoleon III, who were landed on the coasts of Syria. The presence of the indefatigable Abu George, who visited all their villages and settlements at least once a month, generally oftener, was sufficient to maintain, at least outwardly, some show of peace.

With the local Moslems things were different, there had been mixed Christian and Moslem villages in the district ever since the days of the Crusades. In fact most of the latter were indistinguishable in breed from the former, for both had a great admixture of Frankish blood, as they were bound to have after 198 years of practically continuous Crusader rule. The Moslems were mainly descendants

of those of the Christian population who had relapsed after the broad Cross of St. George had taken wing to near-by Cyprus. In many villages the very houses were part of the great perimeter of Crusading castles and fortresses, which, in the later phases of the wars for Holy Rood, had formed the frontier defences of the Principality of St. John of Acre. In no part of the country is one so intimately in contact with the mailed conquerors and soldiers of the ancient Land of Outremer, a contact all the more close when one sees the many obviously European traces in the population. In their daily routine and life are embalmed the mediaeval vices, virtues and ways of thought of the ages of chivalry.

But deep below the surface there ran a current of fanaticism and intolerance, a stream of mutual hatred and distrust. This came to a head in one case that Abu George had to settle. There was a Maronite priest in one of the villages near Rameh. These Maronites have accepted the primacy of the Petrine see and pay their obedience to Rome, but, although Catholic priests in the fullest sense of the word, they are of different rite and under another religious discipline from that of the Western clergy. In one great particular they differ, for the clergy are still, as were once those of Europe, allowed to marry and rear families. Whether or not this is a good thing is a matter that I am not competent to argue, and one about which I do not worry ; but, at least, it exposes the priests to many of the dangers that beset their parishioners. This particular clergyman had an extremely beautiful daughter, who was no better than she ought to have been. Many young Moslems delighted in her company and some scandal was caused. As is usual, the father, the man most nearly concerned, was the last

## PRIEST'S DAUGHTER

to suspect anything, and, for a long time, was ignorant of what every other person in the village fully knew. Even Abu George, on a visit to the priest, noticed that there were a number of young Moslem men in the house, one of whom was on such intimate terms with the household, that, when the officer asked for matches to light up the "Capstan" in his pipe, one of the men went into an inner room, unaccompanied, and brought him a box.

Abu George put this down at first to the priest's known desire to proselytize, for which he was notorious, and which had led to many rows in the past; but when he saw how the girl unwittingly betrayed the intimate terms on which she stood with the young men, he made a mental note to keep an eye on affairs, for from such causes rise most of Palestine's murders that do not owe their motives to a pursuance of blood feuds. He called the young man aside when leaving the house, and warned him to leave the priest's daughter alone, asking him what he meant by entering the house so openly, and being on such terms with the girl. The young man leered, and, shrugging his shoulders, said:

"*Effendi*, she is but a Christian and therefore damned in any case. Why should she not enjoy her time on earth, for there is no hereafter for such as she?"

"That is as maybe," answered Abu George, "and my responsibilities are not concerned with the Land beyond the Grave, but I *am* concerned with what happens in this life in my district. Therefore, I warn you, leave the maid be."

"Maid!" sneered the man, and sniggered.

Furiously Abu George spun the lout round, his furious blue eyes glaring into the now frightened ones of the young Arab.

‘ ‘ P E A C E   O N   T H E   B O R D E R L A N D ’ ’

“Dog and son of a dog,” roared the officer, “is this the way in which you speak to me? Remember, I will have no killings and fightings because of a loose woman. Leave her alone, I say.”

“Your pardon, *Effendi*,” said the young man, cringing and backing away. Then, thinking that he was at a safe distance, he delivered his parting shot. “Had I known that you were jealous of the girl, or that I had interfered with your plans regarding her, I would have kept away,” and fled between the houses with a shout of laughter. It was only too obvious that his interest in maintaining peace would be misconstrued and he allowed the matter to drop.

Some weeks later he again had occasion to visit the priest and was surprised to find that the girl was not at home. The father explained that she had gone to Bethlehem to pay a visit to her relatives, and, relieved to find that one cause of trouble was removed, Abu George thought no more about it. When however, a month later, he was again told by the priest, that the girl was still away, he thought it strange, but paid no particular attention. One morning about a week after his last visit, he found an anonymous letter in his mail, which stated that the girl had been murdered by her father, and he began to think furiously. He sent for a convict in the prison, a cousin of the priest, and demanded the addresses of all their relatives in the south. Armed with this list he sent one of his Christian troopers, in plain clothes, on special duty to the houses of the relatives, and discovered that the girl had not visited them for months.

Back to the village went Abu George, and again fell into conversation with the priest, ending by saying that he was going on leave to Jerusalem, and asking if he

could take any message to the daughter, who, so her father said, was living at Urtas near Bethlehem. This Abu George knew to be false and he began to walk casually about the house, followed by the haggard-eyed priest. In the lavatory, which was of the usual cess-pit variety, he noticed that the smell was even worse than is usual, and he decided to look for himself. The cess-pit was not entirely underground, but was contained in masonry, with a door that could be opened to allow it to be emptied once in a while. With his handkerchief over his nose he began to explore with his stick, noticing that the priest was now in a state bordering on collapse. The filthy task was rewarded, for in the course of a few minutes, he found the first limb of the girl's dismembered body, and calling in his troopers, who impressed a number of villagers into work, it was not many hours before the whole of the pitiful corpse was discovered.

Into the *diwan*, the principal room of the house, went Abu George, and commenced questioning the priest. By this time the wretched cleric was almost beyond words, but, roused at last, he told the whole tale.

"By God and His Saints," he swore, "I will tell you the truth of this matter. I have had it so long on my conscience that I am glad that, at last, all is laid bare. My daughter was bad, a harlot, and fit only for death. The fact that she was my child, the girl of a priest, only makes her guilt doubly black. I heard stories, many stories, and, God forgive me I did not believe them, for I thought my little Yousra incapable of such deadly sin."

"Say nothing more," cautioned Abu George, "for I must have your words written down, and they will be used when you come before the *Mekhemeh*, and the judge decides upon your fate. Yet, if you do wish to speak,

every word you say will be written down, and you will be asked to sign the paper containing them. I advise you to see your *Mohame*, the lawyer who will help you in your defence, ere you say anything which may convict you."

"No," said the man, "I *will* speak, and life will be sweeter if I can but lift this load from my soul."

Abu George sent for his sergeant, and bidding him bring ink and paper, the statement was taken down.

"One day proof was brought to me that she had sinned with Saleh Ibrahim Mifleh and others, and that, furthermore, she was with child. This I discovered when I found her weak and ill in her bed, and unable to rise, for she had been to that daughter of Shaitan the Evil One, Fathma Zenoba, the Druze, who with herbs and grasses aids sinful girls to rid themselves of the unwanted children that their sins bring upon them. I taxed her with her guilt and she brazenly admitted it, saying that I was too old-fashioned, and did not recognize how the world had advanced since I was young. I demanded the name of the father of her child, and she could not give it me, for she had sinned with several, all of them accursed Moslems.

"Then, in my anger, shame, and grief, I drew the pillows over her face and held them there until she died, after which I dismembered that body that had sprung from my own loins, and hid it in the place in which you have discovered it."

Signing his statement, he bowed his head, and asked, "What happens to me, Abu George Effendi?"

"That I cannot say, Father," replied the officer, "but God send I am never faced with the same circumstances in the person of my little daughter. You must come to

## THE PRIEST'S TALE

the prison, and afterwards you shall be tried for the murder of your child, and what your punishment will be only God and the future can tell."

Ordering two of his men to take charge of the prisoner, but to show him every consideration, he told them to take him down to Acre, and lodge him in the prison. He had another case at Tershiha and rode across the hills to deal with a caravan of smugglers that his invaluable alliance with the French north of the line had informed him was on the way. Fifty-one kilogrammes of tobacco was all that he seized, for the main part of the caravan had entered Palestine by another route.

The next morning he rode into Acre and was met by his native officer with the news that the priest-prisoner had committed suicide on his way down to prison. Angrily he sent for the two troopers and listened to their story. The senior man, saluted, drew himself upright, and spoke.

"*Effendi*, Trooper Abdel Rahman and I left with the prisoner immediately we were ordered. We halted to rest our horses at Mejdal Krum village, and there the prisoner asked leave to write a letter whilst we remained in the house of the *mukhtar*. We allowed him to do so, telling him that he would have to give us the letter to submit to you before it could be delivered. He handed it to us in this envelope, which, as you can see, is unaddressed, and sealed down.

"Within half-an-hour we marched and, when we reached the Plain, we stopped again at the well at the back of the mount on which, so I have heard tell, your Richard the Lion Heart, *El Melek Rik Kalb-el-Assad*, in the days he fought the glorious Emir Salah-ed-Deen Ayoubi, suffered shame when his standard was cast down

by the *Namsawi* king. There the priest asked if he could fetch himself a drink. Knowing that the country was open we allowed him to do so, for Your Honour had told us to treat him well. Next we heard a cry and the sound of something bumping, followed by a splash. We rushed around the wall of the well, which, as Your Honour knows, is built like a little house, and found that the priest had thrown himself headlong down the shaft. It is nearly thirty *piks* (about 45 feet) deep, and so we could not rescue him until we had fetched ropes from some Bedouin, who were on the Plain about three miles away. We worked hard to recover the body as we did not wish the water of this very good well to be spoilt, and after three hours brought him to the surface, but he was dead. He was killed, so said the doctor, by knocking his head against the walls of the shaft as he fell. That is all.”

Abu George dismissed them, and then tore open the letter. He read :

ABU GEORGE EFFENDI,

I, the unworthy priest, being on the point of death, wish to tell you how it is with me. I have determined to kill myself before I reach Acre. Enough shame have I brought upon the priesthood, and upon my Faith, by what I have done, and now I realize that I had no right to take the maid’s life. For what she had done she was answerable only to God, and it was in selfish rage that I killed her.

I cannot have it said that a priest of the Church was hanged for child-murder upon your gallows, and, even though I lose my soul into eternal damnation by self-slaughter, yet I must do it, facing even this greater

punishment for the sake of my Church's honour. For, if I kill myself, the matter will not be so much discussed and therefore will not be a source of scandal to many of our young people who might, thereby, be led to stray from the one true path.

Therefore I thank you for all you have done for me in the past, and, if you consider it worth the trouble, pray for the soul of one who thinks, and knows, it his duty to slay himself. Farewell.

Abu George felt in his wallet, drew out a pound note, put it in an envelope, pressed the bell and handed it to an orderly.

"Take this to the Superior of the Franciscan Friars in the city, and ask him to have Masses said for the repose of the soul of one newly dead."

Then packing up the various papers, the investigation reports, the statements and the last letter, he sent them forward to Headquarters, and, reaching for the Register of Crimes, wrote "Disposed" in the column marked "Result of Case."

He fell into a reverie over the case, but he was immediately roused from it by the arrival of the world-traveller, Lady Dorothy Mills, who came into the barracks, accompanied by Stead, the Director of Customs. She was all agog to be taken around the citadel prison, and the other Crusading remnants of Acre, and to see something of the life of the people in the frontier areas. A good thing for Abu George, for it took him out of any morbid thoughts over the fate of the unhappy priest.

Abu George's incessant labours, his astuteness, his unrelenting pursuit of outlaws, his intensive system of patrols, and his inveterate good luck, began to have their

due effect. The people of the villages and the Bedouins of the waste spaces had a healthy fear and respect for him, and all manner of secret information began to flow in. Slowly they began to understand that a heinous crime in their vicinity meant the quick and inevitable appearance of the man whom they believed was under the especial patronage of Eblis, the Evil One Himself, and of his equally to-be-feared troopers. These latter had now definitely “got their tails up,” they were no longer the dispirited, broken-hearted crew they had been, when every attempt they made to establish Law and Order had led to certain trouble because Headquarters listened to anonymous letters from the criminals and their relations. Now they had a vivid and growing *esprit-de-corps*, a thing most difficult to instil into your Arab trooper. They had a proper pride in their Service, and in the uniform they wore. The sight of a khaki tunic was already being regarded as some earnest of security of property, and safety of life and limb, amongst the vast majority of law-abiding people along the borders of northern Palestine.

But all this was not accomplished without the paying of a terrific price by the man in question. The strain of incessant watchfulness in a large and disturbed area, containing so many mutually hostile elements, the gnawing anxiety of having to safeguard and circumvent many hundreds of desperate convicts in the prison under his charge, the constant mental clash of wills, his own against so many malignant minds, to say nothing of the strain of continuous murder threats directed against him, and his family, were all bound to leave their mark. When you add that his success was regarded with the greatest chagrin by many of his brother officers, who were envious

of what he had done, and, knowing themselves inferior to the energetic man who had done so much, were determined to belittle and keep him down, added to his labours in building the main road and many other smaller ones, thereby opening up the villages to rapid police action, it can be easily seen that the strain promised to become more than any one man could stand. On top of these difficulties he was stricken with the same deadly malaria, always so prevalent in Acre, that had led to the practical extermination of the hosts of Richard Lion Heart.

The prison alone was a job for two British officers, the district for at least two more, whilst the road-building was a full-time occupation for another. Some relief was accorded to him by Freddy Miller, an ex-Post Office official, being appointed to take over command of the penal settlement, but there was still far too much for the man to do, and he began to show signs that he was cracking under the strain. What hurt him most, and did him the greatest harm, was the lack of sympathy displayed by his commanding officer, W. F. Sinclair, the District Commandant of Police, a man who stated openly that he had "broken" more officers during his tenure of office, than he possessed fingers on his two hands. Sinclair was an efficient, but ruthless type of man, one who had not been used to the command of armed men, until the War, and the fact that he knew a little Arabic, had made him chief of police of the Northern District. There were others only too willing to conspire against Abu George, in order to obtain a part of his command, yet there were none who were wishful to take on the whole of his duties. Faced not only with the lies and intrigues of the people of his district, with the conspiracies and machinations of his convicts, but also knowing that some

of those upon whose loyalty and co-operation he ought to have been able to count, were only too anxious to slip a metaphorical dagger into his back, it is no wonder that he became even more dour, grim and ferocious than he had been, and that he believed himself justified in adopting some of the means used against him by his traducers and enemies.

Abu George, now that most of his indigenous “bad hats” had either been killed, imprisoned or hanged upon his new gallows, set himself to work to try and compose the blood-feuds that were riving his people into many murderous parties. Riding boldly up the pass above the Khirbet he re-entered the Aramshi territory, and, summoning the tribe to meet him, announced that he had come to settle the age-old vendetta that lay between them and the Semineh tribe. It took nearly three days of earnest argument before the tribesmen would agree to meet a delegation of the enemy tribe, and another two days before they, in their turn, could be persuaded to send a delegation to the Aramshi.

Finally both tribes agreed to meet at the Khirbet, under the presidency of Abu George. A mile on each side he posted a picket, who were charged with seeing that all the warriors coming to the meeting carried nothing but side-arms, that all firearms had been left at home. It was, of course, illegal for them to have rifles and revolvers, a crime that would ensure their being sent to prison, but Abu George knew that they all had arms in profusion, as has every village and tribe from Dan to Beersheba. For another two days he sat patiently at the Khirbet, listening to the tales of both sides and it needed no little knowledge of history to come to the rights of the matter. The feud had existed for several centuries, and had been

a succession of mean and dirty tricks from one generation to the next.

After listening to stories of treachery and murders alleged by one side against the other, from a dastardly attempt by one Aramshi against an opponent whilst both were serving in the Turkish trenches facing the Australians at Suvla ; through a tale of denunciation to the French when they landed in Syria to protect the Christians in 1861 ; the Crimean troubles ; the invasion of Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Ali Pasha and their Egyptian hordes (one side even accused the other of having denounced an opponent to the British Marines who took Acre after the bombardment of 1841) ; the time of Jezzar Pasha and the defence of Acre by Sir Sidney Smith against Abuna Barte (Bonaparte) ; right back to the days, as nearly as Abu George could place it, of some time in the early seventeenth century, when both tribes had been hired by the leader of a foray made by the galleys of the Religion, the Knights of Malta, vengefully raiding Carmel to punish a local prince who had slaughtered some Christian hermits living on the Holy Mountain. When the Knights had finally withdrawn, the Aramshi had purchased pardon by denouncing their quondam allies to the vengeance of the angry Moslem overlords, since when both tribes had taken every opportunity to ambush, murder and harry the cattle and women of their enemies.

With the original cause discovered it did not take long to commence negotiations for a healing of the breach. The Aramshi admitted their fault and agreed to pay a certain compensation. Each murder that could be remembered, and the Bedouins' memory for such incidents is the longest on earth, was carefully totted up, and the

final bill was paid, the Aramshi finding that they had a debit balance of ten sheep and four goats. Abu George rose to his feet when the final total had been arrived at, and addressed the assembled peoples, in the time honoured manner.

“ O Great Sheikhs and noble people of the Arab, Praise be to the One whom we both worship, peace has now been restored between you. Therefore I beg you, for my sake, the sake of a man who is a stranger but your servant, that you, chiefs and people of the Semineh, will remit, in the cause of Peace and Brotherhood, half of the debt which you have agreed is due to you by the great people of the Aramshi.”

Followed a flowery speech by the Sheikh of the creditors, willingly agreeing to the rebate, and then going on to promise, beast for beast, one of his animals for each one of the debt owed by the debtors, both lots to be put together, slaughtered and a great feast of reconciliation held. Held it was, with great mountains of rice, with *kubabs*, with *Bahloweh* sweetmeats and all the adjuncts of such a banquet, and glad was Abu George to remember that he had a bottle of “ Milk of Magnesia ” safely in his holsters. One dawn, three weeks later, as he went with old Jock, his dog companion, for his morning swim, he found packed in a bundle on his front doorstep at Acre, a number of rifles and filled bandoliers, laid there by both tribes as an earnest of the sincerity of their reconciliation. A note was attached which stated that they now had no longer any reason for the weapons and surrendered them. Abu George smiled to himself, but said nothing, when he found that all the surrendered arms were old, though still serviceable. Reconciled they might be, but any new rifles had been carefully retained in case of eventualities.

There was still one more outlaw chieftain left to bother the newly won peace of the border, Infady Eneim, a man who was wanted on a capital charge, and who had been condemned to death in default. Twice Abu George made contact with him, once one of his troopers, riding at his elbow, was seriously wounded by the outlaw's bullets, but on each occasion the man made good his escape. Every endeavour to capture him was made, but all without success, as he disappeared over the border into troubled Syria when the pursuit got too hot. Lateefa, summoned by a red bedspread being put out on his line, promised to help, and at last said that Eneim was at Jardieh and that she would arrange to have him sent in, or else for him to surrender.

A few nights later, Abu George was asleep (months before he had let it be known publicly that he slept in a different part of the house from his wife and family, so that, if any attempt was made on his life, the murderers would not terrify his people), when he heard a sound in the shrubs outside his window. Silently he slipped from his bed, revolver in hand, and with carefully-suppressed breathing listened to a man approaching the window. A guttural voice in Arabic spoke, softly :

"Art thou within, Abu George ?" Receiving no reply, he asked again, in a louder key. "'Tis I, *Effendi*, Infady Eneim, he whom thou hast hunted. See, I place my rifle, butt first, through the bars of the window, in token that I surrender," and suited the action to the words.

Still keeping in shelter of the wall, Abu George answered :

"I am glad to see thee, man, but do you think that I am fool enough to come forward and grasp thy weapon, knowing that you carry a pistol as well. Place thy pistols on the sill and I will come forward."

Whilst the man fumbled, Abu George took advantage of the darkness and slipped outside, down the passage, through the back door and out into the garden. Silently in bare feet, he stole along the path, then approached his window, and made out the form of the man reaching within.

“ I mean you no treachery, Abu George, I have come in to throw myself on your mercy. Speak, here are all my weapons. Why do you not answer me ? ”

The officer threw the beam of his torch on to the man, for he was now quite certain that there was no one else in the garden.

“ I am armed, O man, and will shoot if you attempt to escape. Put up your hands.”

The man was genuine, however. He had no weapons—his rifle, revolver and two daggers were lying on the window-sill.

“ Walk in front of me, Eneim, and come within the house, for you are my guest.”

Into the house he took him, and called for his servant to make a feed ready. His alarmed wife, by this time well used to the excursions and alarms of life in Acre, came into the room, wrapped in her dressing-gown, but, seeing the man, in accordance with the code of Arab etiquette, which Abu George always insisted on observing, instantly withdrew to quieten the crying children. A few minutes later George himself ran in, his little bare feet pattering on the tiles.

“ What have you done this time, Dad ? Oh, is that Eneim whom Sergeant Ibrahim told me that you would surely capture ? Yes, it is, I know, for the sergeant said that he had a beard like that, and that his eyes and face would be like this man.” Turning to the Arab

outlaw, the little boy gravely said in sonorous Arabic: "I am glad to see thee, man, and that thou hast sense to see that it is no use to oppose my father. Be welcome, Eneim, look on my father's house and family as yours."

Both police officer and outlaw chuckled at the grave dignity of the boy, and his command of the conventional phrases of the language.

On the 31st December that year Abu George had to undertake a double execution ; five hours later, in scarlet hood and white beard, he was Father Christmas at the children's party at the Haifa Club. He returned to Acre after midnight to find the prison in an uproar, for Daoud Takhrouri, a gigantic and herculean convict, was suffering from one of his periodical brainstorms, and had mopped the floor with five of the warders, and the remainder were scared to tackle him. The man was armed with a snapped-off handcuff which he was swinging by the chain. After a terrific struggle the officer got the better of him, receiving a black eye, and having his cheek laid open in the process. In accordance with his usual custom, Abu George snarled at the warders when they attempted to assist him, and reduced the yelling brute to quietness single-handed. A few minutes later he had Takhrouri taken to the clinic, and was bandaging up a head wound that the convict had sustained, when Daoud suddenly became violent again. The clinic was practically wrecked before Abu George was able to subdue him.

Another penal settlement had existed for some time, Jail Labour Company No. 1, which had been formed to work on the Palestine Railway, and Abu George was sent down to inspect it and hand it over to Pike, an officer newly transferred to the Police from the Gendarmerie, where he had been a warrant officer employed

in the arduous duty of outrider to Sir Herbert Samuel, the late High Commissioner. This Company was in an amazing state; nothing was right with it. The officer who had been in charge thought too much of his social round and not enough of his routine duties. To crown all, one prisoner was missing and could not be found. It was discovered that the officer in charge had “lent” the convict to one of his friends, another British senior official, stationed at Jaffa, and that the man had spent three years of his sentence as that official’s private servant. He travelled up and down the line, wearing civilian clothing, and doing much as he wanted to do, visiting his friends and relations and without anyone suspecting that he was a convict at all. This case was well known to the native population, although no one amongst the British officials had cared to bother himself about it. It was one of the matters that made the *effendieh* shrug their shoulders with good-natured contempt when anyone tried to compare the bribery and corruption of the Ottoman régime with the present enlightened administration. There had been, of course, no question of the convict bribing either the official or the officer commanding the Penal Company, except in so far as it might be argued that the services of such an unpaid servant were in themselves a bribe, a point that I am sure neither official had even realized, but it was impossible to convince the Arab *effendieh* that the transaction was purely innocent. The man who had the convict servant is still serving in one of the most senior positions of the Administration, although the Prison officer has long since departed.

The first escape from the interior of the castle prison now occurred. A number of prisoners had feigned sick-

ness and had been admitted to the Tuberculosis hospital, a none too rare proceeding, for your Bedouin, a man of the open spaces, almost invariably contracts the dread disease when confined in gaol. These men bribed the Medical Orderly to place some of the sputum collected from the cups of the genuine sick into their receptacles, and had been admitted as definitely suffering from the disease. A file was smuggled into them, and they had sawn through the bars of the window and lowered themselves on a rope of sheets to the dry moat below. At the time of the escape the staff of warders had been cut down, despite Abu George's vigorous protests, and the escape from the hospital had been comparatively easy. However, with his usual activity, he was not long before he had recaptured the escaped prisoners.

Next followed a general mutiny whilst Abu George was away in the town, after returning from a strenuous patrol. He rushed into the prison, and, after warning the convicts to submit, advice that was met by a shower of cobble-stones and abuse, he opened fire upon them, with the result that one convict was killed outright, one died of wounds and five were seriously wounded. This ended all trouble in the prison. The man killed instantly was the leader, a nasty gutter-rat from Tiberias, serving a long sentence for a particularly brutal rape of a little Jewish girl.

Sinclair, his commanding officer, took this mutiny as a serious dereliction of duty on the part of Abu George, and made his life unbearable, until, at last, he was forced to the extreme course of demanding an interview with the Inspector-General. The guard which he had been constrained to mount upon his house, owing to several attempts to murder him, was removed by Sinclair's orders,

whilst Abu George was away, and it was an hysterical wife and family to whom he returned. Abu George replaced the guard, and went into Haifa to tell the District Commandant that he had done so. This closed the incident. But that officer's rage was all the greater when the Inspector-General praised the action taken by Abu George to suppress the mutiny.

His health was now so bad that he was ordered sick leave and proceeded to Ramallah, a hill village some ten miles north of Jerusalem, to recuperate. Here he was again able to do fine work for his Service. He was asked to collect what information he could from a certain Rashid Bey Talbieh, who was staying at the same hotel, and who was the go-between from the Druze insurgents in Syria to Geneva. He had been Wazir to His Highness the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, from whom he had parted, not on the best relations. He was a fervent admirer of all things British, and was "all out" to assist his brothers in blood to throw off the French yoke, and, if they could not obtain instant independence, to exchange Mandatories, and have Britain as overlord of the Druze country.

Abu George managed to obtain a most important letter in cipher that had been sent from Geneva to Rashid Bey, without the latter's knowledge that a copy had been made, and to forward it to Headquarters, where it proved of the greatest use.

On his return to duty, he found that things had moved rapidly in his absence. Sinclair had not forgotten his discomfiture over the prison mutiny and the removal of the guard from Abu George's house. When he reported back for duty to District Headquarters at Haifa, he was instructed by his senior to return to Acre and reassume

command of the prison, but that he would be relieved of all police duties. Abu George asked to see the order from Headquarters authorizing this curtailment of his activities, but Sinclair either would not, or could not, produce it, whereupon Abu George refused to take over the prison, or any other duties in Acre, until he had been instructed by Headquarters.

However, mature consideration, and the sensible advice of a friend of his, a highly-placed official in one of the civilian departments, made him reconsider this decision and he went to Acre at once and assumed duty as ordered by Sinclair. He sent a formal notice to him that he had taken over all police duties as well, and intended doing so until he was officially relieved by Jerusalem. He was very near to a nervous breakdown, heartbroken at the attitude of his senior, a collapse that was brought all the nearer a few days later when, with Faraday, another British police officer, he was engaged in testing the gallows prior to an execution. The rope broke as the dummy, of the same weight as the condemned man, was dropped, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he refrained from screaming aloud and becoming hysterical. For many nights after his sleep was haunted by a broken, flying, curling hangman's noose. Then his servant, Osman Mohammed, evidently bribed by some of his enemies, attempted to kill him by setting fire to the house whilst Abu George and his family were asleep.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem had upheld him against Sinclair, and he had been confirmed in his commands both of police and the prisons. This went far towards soothing him, but knowing the nature of his senior, he knew that he had to be all the more careful in case he was tripped

up over inadvertent negligence of some petty regulations. There was trouble with a number of deserters from the French Foreign Legion who had crossed the frontier and were held in Acre prison until their consuls could arrange for their repatriation. This he settled in his usual ruthless fashion, for it was of no use to handle such people with velvet gloves.

In four more places he effected a reconciliation between tribes and villages that had been at blood-feud for years, until at last peace seemed to have settled down on the border lands, a peace that seemed permanent for as long as the Arabs, Mettwalis and Druzes maintained their healthy fear and respect for the burly, hard-as-steel officer who ruled over them.

At last, to Abu George's intense relief, his turn for leave came round, a leave which he purposed spending in Italy, at the home of his wife's family. His family were sent off to Haifa in the afternoon, the Lloyd Triestino packet was due to sail at dawn. He was sitting in his house, quietly putting his last books and registers into order, when, at about midnight, there was a soft scratching on the jalousies of his window, and a woman's voice spoke :

“ Fear not, Abu George Effendi, it is no enemy. It is I, Lateefa, who wishes a word with you, ere you leave us and sail for the lands of the Franks.”

“ I will come outside and speak to you, Lateefa,” he answered, “ for I know well that you would refuse to enter my house, even if I asked you.”

“ Truly,” she replied, “ for that would be shame. Bad enough is it for me, a maiden of the Arab, to come and see a man by night. All the worse is it that the man is a Frank and an Infidel, but I knew that I must see you, for

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it is widely said that you will not come back to our district of Acre, and that we shall lose you for ever."

"No, Lateefa, I shall return," he answered. "It is certain that I must come back to Acre."

"O Frankish man, that I wish was a man of my own people, do you think that we of the Arab are blind to all that is going on? We know that the Bey in Haifa does not love you, maybe he envies the success you have had amongst my people, giving them peace who have been so long at war. No, you will not return to us," she finished sadly.

The soft night wind, whispering down from the hills of Upper Galilee, brushed through the leaves of the pepper-trees and rattled the palm-fronds above their heads, on its way to play with the miniature waves that ruffled the surface of the Mediterranean beside their feet, as both stood silent for a while.

Lateefa, a dark figure in her black and blue Bedouin garments, Abu George, in slacks and khaki drill tunic, bareheaded, unbelted, stood beside each other for a moment.

"O man that I have tried to help, man that has done so much to make the lives of my people safe, how hard is this life of ours," she said wistfully, staring straight out to sea.

"True, Lateefa," he answered. "But are not all things in the hands of Allah?"

"Aye," she sighed wearily, "or so we are taught. Who knows the truth of anything? Maybe once we were different, or, perhaps there are, and have been, other lives and worlds than this. When I first saw you on the mountain-side above the Khirbet, I knew that you and I had much in common with each other. Yet how

can that be, for are you not a great *Inglizi* lord in this poor land of mine, and I but a poor Bedouin girl? You are one of the conquerors, I but a girl of another breed and race from you, one of those who lie beneath your feet, your servant.”

The officer stood silent, looking with infinite pity on this maid who had done so much to help him.

“*Aieee*,” she sighed. “Things befall as it is fated that they should. At some other period, elsewhere, we may meet again, when we are not so far apart as we are to-day. You are married, and, according to your so-foolish law, you may not take other wives. Not that I, Lateefa, would be second to any other woman. Even if you could, it would not be possible that a girl of the Arab should be married to one like you, for I know that your Government looks down upon us of the ancient blood, and that they would force you to return to your own land if you were so foolish. For you to turn Arab and live with my people is also beyond thinking, for your Government would tear you from me and return you by force to your own land, whilst never could you leave that son, George, of thine, and your little daughter.”

Again she fell silent and stood for a while. Then—suddenly, she turned towards him, seized his hand, dashed it to her lips, and ran swiftly away through the trees. He made no move to stop her—how should he when every word she had spoken was the simple, brutal truth—but he stood staring after her, and heard, faint and far away, her voice again.

“Farewell, dearest man, who yet some day shall see me in another world than this. But think not that I shall help your successor in this place even though it be for my own people’s good. Farewell.”

## ARAB MAID AND FRANKISH MAN

He was touched, more than touched, but the swirl and gaiety of the great welcome that the people of Malo gave him on his leave, made him forget Palestine and all its bitternesses, at least for the period of his leave, a fact that probably saved his reason, and certainly his life.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE BLURRING OF THE BLADE

**S**HORTLY after Abu George's return from leave his enemies were triumphant all along the line. His absence from the Holy Land gave them their opportunity, when he was too far away to be able to make head against their insidious activities. In any case, at the end of 1926, he was transferred to Haifa, and relieved of all his commands in the frontier district and of his governorship of the great convict prison in the Castle of the Hospitallers. His protests were stifled by the fact that, in this year, the Palestine Police was completely reorganized, consequent on the disbandment of the two Gendarmeries, and the formation of a British section of non-commissioned ranks from the relics of the British Gendarmerie, and the Transjordan Frontier Force from the squadrons of the old Palestine Gendarmerie.

It was only too obvious that the authorities in the north had determined to allow Abu George no executive position. To cover this up, he was first appointed as second-in-command of Haifa sub-district, a police formation, that, under the reorganization scheme, included his former command in Acre. He was, however, never allowed to take up active duty in this post, as Sinclair told him that he would have to take the position vacated

by the officer who had relieved him in charge of Acre Prison, officially that of Assistant District Superintendent of Police, Northern District Headquarters ; in cold fact, the job of a glorified Chief Clerk. This was a thankless job—all the dirty work to do without the authority needful to make it a success, and with the added disadvantage of working for a man whom he disliked. Sinclair was extremely stern towards all who worked with him, and Abu George found the months that followed the unhappiest period that he had ever spent, and it was not long before he was made to feel the impotency of his position.

It was no wonder that, as month succeeded month, he found himself definitely slipping downhill. Here was a man whose every nerve cried out for action, who demanded that his days and nights should be filled with constant, hard and constructive work, restricted to the petty job of a clerk. In his position he was only too conscious of the mess that was being made of the work to which he had devoted so many years of his life. Crime increased in his old command, the pacification which he had made all along the border-line soon slipped back into the old feuds and vendettas, murders were commonplaces, smuggling of tobacco and drugs resumed its old activity, guns were run with impunity, and armed gangs terrorized many of the villages and tribes that, under his rule, had just begun to feel the benefits of peace. Notables and leading men, *sheikhs* and *mukhtars*, men who had learnt to rely upon him, constantly visited him, and made no secret of their burning desire for his return to their area, but he was powerless to do anything. In only one place was his work still maintained. The new Superintendent of Acre prison proved himself a genius in convict ad-

ministration. Steele, an ex-Regimental Quartermaster-sergeant of the Scots Greys, seemed to have fallen into the niche that suited him. Of course it was easier for him than it had been for Abu George, for he had only the prison to occupy his time, and was spared the constant anxiety of administering a turbulent and difficult district ; but to his stewardship of the Castle-prison one can give nothing but the highest praise. Here, at least, Abu George could see the seed he had sown being brought to most fertile maturity.

But, with the stultification of the burning desire to work constructively, it was easy to see how Abu George was deteriorating. There were only too many officials in Haifa, which was civilization after his lonely work in Acre, who were anxious to drink and make " whoopee " with the dour officer who had won so much praise in his former command. There was nothing to take up his attention, leisure hung too heavily on this man who had never been accustomed to it. Like many more, living the highly artificial life of a Colonial official, he soon found that, willy-nilly, his expenses first perilously approached, and then exceeded, his income. He got to know only too well the old adage about " annual income twenty pounds, expenditure nineteen, nineteen and sixpence—Contentment ; annual income twenty pounds, expenditure twenty, nought, sixpence—Misery." And yet, in that vicious circle, he found it impossible to break away ; weak of him—yes—but true of the great majority. Then he lost the wish to break away and developed the usual disastrous procrastination of his associates. Followed the usual consequences of discontent and domestic troubles—it was only too obvious that his only chance of salvation lay in his instant appointment to a post in which he could

take pride and which would absorb all of his spare time—and that, it seemed, he was not to have.

His diary for the next eighteen months is just one succession of petty duties pettily performed, of constant strife with the superior who had made no secret of his intention to break him. His duties were entirely administrative with little or no contact with the busy, interesting life around him. There was never a clearer case of a very square peg in a particularly greasy round hole, and the man's nature suffered grievously. Once, however, the old combatant nature flashed out. On December 21st, 1926, a convict lay under sentence of death in Acre prison. It was the usual Arab crime, that of a man avenging the adultery of his sister by killing her. This he was bound to do. By the code of the Sons of Ishmael, the nearest male relative of the guilty woman must wash out the stain on the family honour by killing her and her partner in sin if he can get hold of him. The sister had been murdered in a particularly barbarous manner, for the brother had poured paraffin over her and then set her alight. The date of execution was fixed, when the man's lawyer produced a confession by a person who stated that he had been the actual murderer. This, of course, often happens, and on this occasion Abu George was ordered by telephone from Jerusalem Headquarters to tell Steele to postpone the execution. Abu George refused to accept the order, pointing out there were still two days before the date fixed, and said that such matters should be sent direct to the Superintendent of the prison, and, in due course, a written order of postponement of execution was sent. Sinclair again tried to make trouble over his refusing to accept the order, but found that he had acted rightly.

## THE BLURRING OF THE BLADE

Some weeks later Sinclair telephoned Abu George to proceed to Acre at once and execute the murderer. He refused, point-blank, pointing out the proper procedure. Thereupon Major Saunders, the Assistant Commandant of Police, repeated the order from Jerusalem, only to have his order as definitely refused. Abu George pointed out that he could only obey such an order when commanded to do so under the sealed warrant of the High Commissioner. Sinclair became very annoyed, only to be met with a firmly courteous refusal on the part of his subordinate. He was threatened with disciplinary arrest, with instant dismissal, but stood firm in his refusal. He demanded written authority and finally got it—and then, to make matters worse, everything went wrong at the execution. As Abu George himself described it, it was more like a game of “tag” than a solemn, judicial execution, and the effect on the officer in question can be easily judged.

A small interlude did Abu George a lot of good, for one of the cheeriest souls on all the Seven Seas blew into Haifa with the ship under his command—Captain David Bone and his great liner, *Transylvania*—and on her, with the taste of his recent months that the locust had eaten fading, Abu George found himself rapidly returning to what he had been. A visit, a couple of months later, by his old commander, General Sir Aylmer Hunter Weston, further improved matters, and very little would now have been needed to restore Abu George to what he had been before his relegation to an office stool. But it was not to be; he found himself slipping back, pressed down by the continual pin-pricks and the fatuity of his position.

However, release was close at hand. On July 11th,

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1927, occurred the disastrous earthquake that shook Palestine from end to end and caused hundreds of deaths. In the strenuous days of work that followed, saving life, salvaging the dead bodies and in preventing looters, he found himself rapidly getting back to his old outlook, and, before the effect of this wore off, Sinclair suddenly was taken ill, removed to hospital, and emerged only to be taken solemnly, with military pomp, to his long home in the cemetery near Carmel station.

Sinclair was a man who, if he spared no one, least of all spared himself, and it was due to his restless activity that he died so early. He was a man who has left some mark on the policy of the Last Crusade in Outremer, and, however severe he may have been, to himself he was most tyrannical of all. May he rest well.

The last act of Abu George towards his detested superior is characteristic. When the corpse was placed in the coffin, he insisted that the legs should be crossed above the knee, giving him the last honours of those who had ridden, scarlet cross on surcoat, in the saddles of the Knights who fought for Holy Rood and who returned more than once to Outremer. And, bitter though he was, Abu George would allow no enmity to follow across the Bourne, for he paid for Masses to be said for the repose of the soul of the man who had done his utmost to ruin him.

"Poor devil," said Abu George, "there is no one else who will bother to take this trouble about him, and maybe, when we meet again later on, he will be grateful for this last thing I can do for him."

But even in death it seemed that Sinclair pursued him. Abu George was appointed to take charge of his effects, and, whilst packing up the dead man's large collection

## THE BLURRING OF THE BLADE

of valuable antiquities, garnered during many years, he pricked his finger on some article that had laid in the filth of a sepulchre for untold centuries, and, blood poisoning setting in from the scratch, he was brought near to death himself. Months of hospital and special treatment followed and it was not until the beginning of 1928 that he was fit enough to find himself posted to Nazareth in charge of the Police Division, and there gradually brought himself back to the standard of his days in St. John of Acre.

The long rot was over, but the effects of the mildew garnered during that time were to follow him for long. Once again in executive command, now came the greatest testing time of all his service.

These two years I have slurred over ; best so, there is nothing of interest or of edification in them. Merely a long monotonous tale of petty duties unwillingly performed.

## CHAPTER TEN

### NAZARETH

HAPPY as a boy was Abu George when he was ordered to take command of the Nazareth Division. This meant life to him, the chance to use the talents that had been given him, an opportunity to throw off the foul sloth of his administrative work in Haifa, to command men and to bring peace to another troubled area. Things had got so hopeless in Nazareth that, even to Jerusalem Headquarters it was obvious the situation required the skilful handling of a man like Abu George, who had already the pacification of the border-land to his credit.

The town of Nazareth was bad enough, yet the area of which it was the centre was infinitely worse. In the town there were a few Moslems, but the vast majority were Christians of Latin and Greek rites. These were mutually hostile and were quite prepared to resort to any lengths in order to injure their opponents. They are peculiar people, these native Christians of Palestine. Many of them, particularly the older generation, are most estimable characters, and lead lives of great edification and self-denial, but the modern spirit has gripped the imaginations of the juniors. It could hardly be otherwise, for, coddled and pampered from cradle to grave by great charitable and missionary enterprises, they have

lost, seemingly, the rugged, independent, patient spirit of their ancestors who endured persecution, martyrdom and contumely ever since the days of the Moslem conquest.

Nazareth, like Bethlehem, is full of hospitals, schools, orphanages and other charitable institutions, not to mention many monasteries and convents, most of which make some dole to the inhabitants of the town. There are churches, dispensaries, clinics and social halls for every conceivable Christian denomination, from Baptists to Maronites, and the Nazarenes, with the fullest, freest and finest impartiality, make the fullest use of them all. These missionary institutions are continually proselytizing ; never, by any means, do they make a genuine conversion from Islam, or any appreciable number from Judaism, but they manage to make up their number by catching souls from the other Christian bodies into their own particular folds. A couple of instances will show the method :

In a certain small Christian village there was a very popular Latin school-teacher, who, with liberal alms, and a dole of food, clothing and housing, kept the villagers as fervent Latins as he was himself. One day the authorities of that Church ordered the transfer of the teacher to another sphere of activity ; the villagers, egged on by the friends of the teacher, protested to the Patriarch, that, if the order was not countermanded, they would make their submission to the Greek Church.

The Patriarch, annoyed at their dictatorial attitude, stood firm and repeated the original order. The villagers, on the departure of the teacher, promptly joined the Orthodox Church. After a few months a certain Protestant community, newly arrived in the Holy Land, promised them all manner of good things, including a new school-

house, if they would join their sect, whereupon they did so. Their "conversion" was hailed with joy, and, doubtlessly, was given the widest publicity in the circle from which the missionary group drew its funds. But the religious adventures of the community were not yet finished, for the villagers soon found that they could not tolerate the zeal and inquisitiveness of their new pastors, nor live up to the fresh standards demanded of them. They therefore made peace with the prelates of their original church, and, with the original teacher returned to them as an act of grace, to teach in their new school-house, again became fervent Latins.

In Jerusalem, the Latin Convent in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the Custody of Terra Santa, has, for generations, provided free houses for their poor and let its houses at a very nominal rental to members of its communion. This was fair enough in the old days, when the Crescent and poverty weighed heavily on Christians, but has now become a flagrant imposition. The Convent was anxious to put an end to this state of affairs, and asked many Christians who were well able to pay a commercial rent, to move out and make room for the genuinely poor. What a storm was roused! One and all refused to shift, and said that, if they were forced to go, they had good offers of alternative free accommodation from other denominations, as the reward of "conversion."

A rumour ran like wild-fire that the Convent had submitted, but, to impress pilgrims and tourists with the good work it was doing, was going to place a notice on each such house to the effect that the tenant was living practically rent free, as one of the indigent poor whom they existed to serve. The rumour, which was completely without foundation, did the trick; none of them

wished it to be known on what conditions they held their houses. There is little difference in Humanity's mental make-up, whether the continent be Europe, Asia or America.

This was the type of person with whom Abu George was called upon to deal. Politically, things were difficult for him, for, if he as much as scratched one of the members of any sect or Church, he could be quite certain that the Europeans at the head of the denomination would believe every word that the dear lambs of their flock told them, and go to any lengths in supporting them against the brutal officer who was oppressing them. He could rely upon little practical help from anyone, however much they might protest their willingness to aid, in his task of restoring order and peace in Nazareth.

The Nazarenes, bloated with a pseudo-Western education dispensed by the various mission schools and universities, were filled with an exaggerated idea of their own importance, and, drunk with the strange new wine of democracy, which word they took to signify their own superiority over everyone else, were all agog for trouble. Not an odd symptom, perhaps, in a people that have been downtrodden and oppressed for centuries. The pendulum naturally swings farthest when it has been held at the other extremity and is suddenly released.

They were adepts at writing anonymous letters to Jerusalem, at having malicious *canards* published in their local journals, all of which were solemnly noted by an official at Headquarters and collated into a ludicrous Government publication, an inter-departmental circular, entitled *Extracts from the Press*, now, happily, defunct. Any such comment had to be exhaustively explained by the unfortunate officer whose name had been mentioned,

a fact which the Nazarenes fully understood and appreciated. They were equally clever in formulating *mazbata*, round-robins bearing thousands of signatures, accusing the Government officials of every crime from bribery to White Slavery. Generally most of the signatures were false. Abu George grew tired of pointing out to a non-Arabic writing Staff that most of the signatures had either been written by the same hand, were those of people who never existed or of farmers and peasants who had no idea that their names had been used.

Still more dangerous were their political activities in the grand old game of Jew-baiting. Any real alliance between Cross and Crescent in Palestine is as impossible as one between oil and water. There are too many centuries of brutal oppression and persecution, bravely borne, lying between them, to allow of such a friendship, not to mention the intolerance of Islam for all other faiths. Yet it is to this pretended alliance that the Nazarenes make such a show of belonging. It flatters their vanity to believe that they are on equal terms with the young Moslem gentlemen of Jerusalem and Jaffa to whom, through all the centuries, their people have had to look up with awe and respect. The native Christians of Nazareth are extremely useful to the leaders of the Arab party, on account of their superior education and their knowledge of Western ways, gathered from the missionary school-teachers, and they are content to use them, making a great pretence of treating them as equals and brothers. How hollow this pretence actually is has been shown on a hundred occasions, such as the incident when the two parties squabbled over a piece of land in Haifa, and fighting commenced, which ended in revolver shots and murder.

In another way the Nazarenes, in their imitations of European clothes, designed by a Syrian, cut by a Greek and made by an Armenian, and their exaggerated trilby hats, were most useful to the Moslem allies. They held a stranglehold over the Arab peasantry in the hills of Galilee, for they were money-lenders and there were not many of the peasants who were not hopelessly in their clutches. If the Nazarenes cracked the whip their victims would have to dance, and this would be of the greatest service when the Day struck, when the hour came for all Arabs to rise and slay the Jews and drive out the English.

Several police officers in succession had found it impossible to continue serving in Nazareth. If they took determined action against the troublemakers they were exposed to a spate of anonymous letters and *mazbata* and to venomous attacks in the vernacular Press, with the inevitable and odious necessity of replying to all Jerusalem's queries in the matter. No wonder that all heart was taken out of them and that they did as little as they could, content to leave the Nazarenes to pursue their own way. But they soon found that a policy of *laissez-faire*, admirable though it may have been found by others more highly placed than themselves, was of no use to a Divisional Officer of police. Mounting crime-returns got them into difficulties when they were asked to explain the discrepancy between crimes reported and those brought to justice.

Abu George knew and fully recognized the difficulty of his task, and he knew that, as soon as he commenced repressive measures, he would have a hornets' nest around his ears. He realized that every dirty trick would be employed to get him moved once it became apparent that

he was likely to succeed in restoring peace and order, and he was fully prepared for it. Knowing that many of the European residents of Nazareth, most of them connected with some form of religious institution, would be amongst those who would, at the behests of their flocks, make the biggest outcry against him, he carefully abstained from getting to know any of them, bar the Area Officer.

Before commencing to straighten up the affairs of the town, he determined to put a stop to the widespread agrarian crimes in the villages. Animal-maiming, cutting down and burning of olive trees, uprooting of crops, setting fire to threshing-floors and the arson of barns and stables were only too common, and the attendant clan-fights and murders that arose out of them, distressingly frequent. These crimes, undoubtedly instigated by the Nazarenes, were having the result they were working for, that is impoverishing the *fellahin*, and driving them into the traps of the Nazarene money-lenders. They were only too glad to lend money to the farmers, often at as much as 300 per cent., to squeeze as much as they could out of the wretched man, and then to be able to foreclose on his land. Not that they wished to farm it themselves, not by any means ; but the Jews would be only too glad to buy it, at exorbitant prices, sooner or later. Nearly every man of Nazareth had land ready to sell to the Jews, despite the fact that they were continually signing high-sounding declarations about never surrendering one inch of the " Fatherland " to the detestable intruders, and reasserting their intention to die in defence of *El Wattan*, should the occasion arise.

These agrarian crimes are practically impossible to detect, for no one, least of all the injured party, dare give any information to the police. In most cases they have

been guilty of the same offences themselves, and dare not face an accusation. They prefer to wait and exact vengeance themselves.

Before Abu George had really started on his campaign, swarms of locusts descended upon the country. In countless myriads they arrived from east of Jordan, devouring everything before them. The peasants were mustered into large gangs and put to work fighting the pests. Apparatus was woefully lacking. Flame projectors in the hands of the *fellahin* were more dangerous to Abu George and his men than they were to the locusts, and, in any case, there were not nearly enough of them.

The only method was the ancient one, that of bringing every person out of the villages and make them wave branches, and hammer on tins, to scare the flying swarms and prevent them settling. This method certainly saved some fields, but merely drove the insects on to other places less well guarded. Abu George was constantly in the saddle, and he and his men covered every inch of ground to locate the places where the swarms settled and laid their eggs. The ground was immediately ploughed, a procedure that destroyed millions of eggs, but there were scores of millions left, and it is when these "hoppers" commence moving forward, before they attain the power of flight, that there occurs the only chance of exterminating them.

The peasants were conscripted into service, together with their beasts of burden, whilst all available motor-transport was requisitioned. Several miles of low zinc plates, their lower edge buried in the ground, are erected in a wall across the path of the hopping myriads. At intervals gaps are left in the wall, and deep pits are dug to fill the breaches. The "hoppers" advance until they

## PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

encounter the barrier of zinc plates, when they turn and march to a flank, in an endeavour to find a way round. As soon as they reach a gap they pour like a torrent, forced on by those in rear, into the pits. The holes rapidly fill, and a gang of peasants are standing ready to shovel the earth in on top of them, or to pour paraffin, if any is available, and burn them. As soon as the pits are filled, the whole zinc wall is at once lifted, it may be as much as eight miles in length, and shifted to a new position in the path of the hopping locusts, where the process is repeated. This is strenuous enough when it is done on the soft soil of the plain, but imagine the labour involved when the wall has to be erected up and down the slopes of rocky, boulder-strewn mountains.

Abu George and his men worked like Trojans to save the Arab farmers from themselves. The Arab peasant is not a lover of strenuous work, and he is only too apt to throw up the sponge and sit quietly by whilst the locusts destroy his crops, content to see in the visitation the inscrutable hand of Fate. Constant vigilance and almost tyrannical methods are necessary to keep them toiling at the wall. Those who shirked felt the rough side of Abu George's tongue and the sting of his hide *kurbaj* around their shoulders, with the inevitable result that he was continually being called in from his valuable work to answer queries from Headquarters investigating complaints made against him by the Nazarenes.

Despite his best efforts, and the fact that the Jewish colonists on the Plain of Armageddon were seconding his toil to the utmost, it appeared that the locusts would win easily and leave a devastated country behind them. But, at the eleventh hour, unexpected allies arrived from the clouds. Vast flocks of storks, " Abu Saad " as the Arabs

call them, suddenly appeared in the Jordan Valley and the Yarmuk, and ate the "hoppers" by the hundred thousand. This turned the tide of battle; the *fellahin*, weary and work-worn, saw the finger of Allah in the arrival of the birds, and set to work with fresh enthusiasm. At last, after weeks of effort, it became apparent that a greater part of the harvest would be saved, and that the grim spectre of famine would be forced to disappear again.

Abu George was now able to turn his attention to the equally dangerous human pests that infested his division. The first village to feel the weight of his determination was Seffuriyeh, once a city and the capital of Herod's tetrarchy of Galilee, the home of the childhood of the Blessed Virgin, and now a tumbled mass of ruins and dirty houses. The people of the village are a picturesque and turbulent people, noted for mischief even in trouble-fraught Palestine. They are a strange, hybrid race, their fair hair and blue eyes bearing eloquent witness to the strength of the Crusading strain that runs in their blood. They have many words in their dialect which can easily be recognized as Norman French in origin and are as truculent as were any of their fighting ancestry. Feuds of long standing, generally murderous in their results, rend the village into several factions, which cheerfully commit the most terrible crimes, agrarian and otherwise, against their enemies. How terrible these feuds are can be shown from one incident.

A man had been shot by his enemies during a clan fight in the village. In a very critical condition he had been taken to Nazareth hospital, where, after a few days he began to show signs that he would, eventually, recover. His enemies got to know of this, and determined to finish off their half-completed work by going up to the hospital

and slaying him in his bed. This hospital is built on the slope of the mountain, and its wards are on the first floor, the ground floor being mainly store-rooms and kitchens. Entrance is obtained by a flight of stone stairs in front of the building which lead on to the first floor. It was in the days before I met Janet, my wife, and, at the time, she was a sister in the hospital in question. Abu George told me the story one evening in the Galilee Hotel. He outlined the facts of the case and went on to say :

“I got a rush call from the hospital that they were being attacked by armed Arabs, and I lost no time in getting there with every man I could lay my hands upon. Half of Seffuriyeh was yelling and roaring in front of the place, shouting that the injured man should be given up to them or they would burn the place. Several of them were trying to scramble through one of the windows, having reached it with a ladder. Luckily that Scots girl, Sister —, was there, armed with a mop, and as each head, complete with dagger in its teeth appeared, she smote it and knocked the man off the ladder. Good job that she was there as everybody else seemed to have panicked. They soon cleared off when they saw me appearing.”

“Did you catch many of them ? ” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, “and not by any ruddy chamois act of chasing them over the mountain, either. Drove back to Seffuriyeh and collected them as they came home.”

To resume. A great many olive trees were cut down on the first night that he spent in bed after returning from his campaign against the locusts. Full of wrath he descended upon Seffuriyeh. No one knew anything about it. No one dared. Giving information to the police at that time was tantamount to committing suicide,

and dooming one's wife and family to being murdered. Abu George begged the Administration to impose the sanctions of the Prevention of Crime Ordinance, which would have made all the villagers financially responsible for any damage done, but met with the usual reluctance to take definite steps against the law-breakers.

This constrained him to take private measures. He sent troopers to bring every able-bodied man into Nazareth for an interview. On one pretext and another, whilst maintaining the blandest and most urbane courtesy to them, and continually thanking them for their co-operation, he kept them there for nearly a month, thoroughly disorganizing the work and life of the village. Even after he allowed them to go home, he made a point of sending for the notables eight or nine times a week, at all hours of the day and night, and gravely discussing the affairs of Seffuriyeh with them. These journeys along the steep mountain tracks, added to the fact that they were often kept waiting for hours before Abu George could see them, soon convinced the villagers that this particular form of crime was hardly worth while. A strange freedom from agrarian outrages reigned over Seffuriyeh thereafter.

Gradually other villages were convinced of the same startling fact, though, for nearly two years, it was usual to see crowds of villagers sitting outside the *serai* waiting to be interviewed by an inexorable Abu George. The low *effendieh*, to their intense disgust, found that the peasants were beginning to be able to make a fair living, now that they had some security, and were less in need of their money-lending assistance. They did their utmost to put a stop to such an unsatisfactory state of affairs and raised heaven and earth to bring the authorities down

upon Abu George's devoted head. He countered by saying that, if so much of his time were occupied in answering futile queries from Jerusalem, he would have none in which to look after his division. He pointed, triumphantly, to the improvement he had already effected, and suggested that he should be left alone to do more.

Then, one morning, to his intense delight, he saw an old Bedouin stalk into his office, dagger in belt and sword on thigh. He rose from his chair to welcome him, and stood with outstretched hand.

"*Mahaba, Musa, y'Akhi.* Welcome, O Musa, my brother," he said. "What brings you to see me?"

"*Mahabatain, y'Abu George Beyk,*" answered the old desert warrior, his hand to forehead, lips and breast, in the traditional salutation. "If you will have me, I would serve you again as I did in Acre."

"Gladly will I have thee, Musa. Your eyes and hands are badly needed in this place," replied Abu George. "With your help to follow the tracks of criminals and stolen animals, it will not be long before I make peace in this district like we did in Acre. But why did you leave the police, Musa?"

"Because, *Effendi*, after you were taken from Acre, the officer who succeeded you laughed at me when I was following tracks, and then called me a liar. For that reason I left, for you know that Musa is no liar, at least not when he is pursuing the tracks of man or beast."

"That is true, O my brother," gravely answered Abu George, "yet there is an excuse for that officer. Often, when I first worked with you, I thought that you pretended to know more than any man could possibly discover from mere marks on the ground. It was only later when I saw that you were always right, that I came to

trust you so fully. But why, Musa, did you never come and see me whilst I was at Haifa ? ”

“ For this reason, Abu George Beyk, and, as we are brothers, forgive me if I speak plainly and hurt you. It was told in our tribe that you were no longer the man that we had known and honoured. It was said that you had become soft and luxurious, as do all men of our kind, when they go to live in cities. This I would not believe, and I went to see for myself how it fared with you.”

“ Yes, Musa,” quietly asked the officer, “ and what did you find ? ”

“ That what I had heard was true,” said the old warrior sadly. “ I stood one evening in the road outside the Club of the *Ingliz* in the German Colony, close beside the wooden railings, and I waited until you came out. I approached to speak to you, but you swore at me and cursed me, using terms such as I would not spit at a dog. Without saying a word, *Effendi*, I turned and left you, for I saw plainly that it was not the soul of my brother who inhabited your body that night.”

“ Then what has brought you here, Musa ? ”

“ Because I had heard, and I now see, that the man I knew and loved is back again. I wished to serve you, and one of my tribe, one of my nearest in blood, one to whom I refuse nothing, asked me to come,” he paused, “ and therefore have I left my people of the Aramshi and come to you.”

“ And the name of the relative ? ” asked Abu George.

“ One,” answered Musa, but Abu George recognized that he used the feminine form, “ *Wahidi*.”

Thus came Musa to ride again at Abu George’s elbow, with khaki tunic covering his muscular spareness, and with rifle across the front arch of his saddle.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### MUTTERINGS OF THE RISING STORM

WITH the powerful aid of old Musa, Abu George now felt capable of tackling the sinister wave of highway robbery, brigandage and murder which held Nazareth division in its grip. He was the more determined now that he had three excellent junior officers attached to him, Lazarovitch, a gigantic, heroic young Jew ; Zahed Effendi Bseisso, a scion of the great and princely Bseisso clan, all-powerful in Gaza and the south country ; and dapper young Langer, a dandy ex-officer of Austrian Uhlands, and cavalryman *par excellence*. The latter he posted to Afuleh, the growing Jewish township on the Plain of Armageddon, and retained the other two to help him in Nazareth itself.

All over the Plain of Armageddon, the rich corn-lands were dotted with Jewish villages and settlements, each busily engaged in consolidating the National Home. This plain had laid for centuries, practically uncultivated, the property of absentee landlords. Most of the land had been bought by the Hebrew funds from the Sursok family, domiciled in Syria and France, who had never bothered to visit their patrimony. The Jews paid top-price for everything they got, and were now determined to see some return for their expended capital and the labour that they had put into the place. The Nazareth

*effendieh* immediately started an outcry that thousands of Arab proprietors and peasants had been dispossessed, and were now wandering in penury and want, gravitating towards the city, where they joined the underworld and became, from sheer necessity, desperate criminals.

At the risk of appearing biased may I say that this was far from the case? Very small patches of the plain were cultivated by the Arabs, all of whom avoided it and lived in the hill villages overlooking it. Rents charged by the absentee landlords were too high, the taxes under the Ottoman régime too crushing to encourage the *fellah* to undertake more cultivation than he needed for actual subsistence, whilst most of the plain was so plague-infested by deadly malaria and other diseases of the swamps that the Arab avoided it like the Devil is reputed to shun holy water. It was only when, after paying a terrible toll in health and life, the new colonists had canalized the sluggish Kishon and its tiny tributaries, and drained the contiguous swamps, that life became possible on the great stretch of flat land between the hills of Samaria and the mountains of Lower Galilee.

At Afuleh, a strategical and important place, situated on the junction of the Damascus-Haifa railway, with the Nablus line, and astraddle the North Road, there had been a collection of filthy, verminous mud-hovels on a small mound. These buildings had been granaries and animal-shelters, used by the hill-farmers who carried on a small amount of cultivation in the immediate vicinity, but elsewhere on the plain, north of the railway, where now stood the vast majority of the new settlements, there had been no single building to break the flat monotony. The hill-farmers had certain grazing rights, it is true, in fact they still have them in most places, but,

if a thousand times as many stock had been fed as they put into it, there would still have been room for more.

The new settlers may, perhaps, have committed a grave error in judgment, when they razed the hovels of Afuleh and erected their new township a little to the west of the site, but they were prompted to do so by the most primitive necessities of health and sanitation. The hovels, through centuries of neglect and no attempt at drainage, had become unspeakably filthy, verminous and foul, an unendurable menace to the health of the new settlers. However, the bare mound where the hovels had stood, was one of the most potent weapons in the hands of the Arab malcontents, and it was no strange sight to see a convoy of motor-cars, bearing peasant and Bedouin notables from the south in a personally-conducted tour, with firebrand *effendieh* in attendance, pulling up, and being harangued to this effect :

“ Look, O people, and see ! Here was a beautiful Arab town, in which lived your brothers in blood. See the desolation which now is, where once stood that place so dear to the hearts of men and women of your own race ! Look across there, now, and see the houses of these accursed Jews, who have destroyed the town out of hatred for the Sons of the Faith. What they have done to this beautiful place will they not also do to your own great cities of Hebron, Beersheba and Gaza ? Will not even your own little villages and your own dear homes be violated and totally destroyed, even as they have done to Afuleh ? The sons of dogs are pouring into the country, helped by their slaves the *Ingliz*, and some day soon they will spread all over our fair land like locusts, devouring everything before them. The day is not far distant when the Sons of the Arab will be outcasts in

their own land. Think of the great Dome of the Rock, the noble *Haram esh Sherif* in Jerusalem, the city hallowed by the visit of our Lord the Prophet. Was it not once the Temple of these accursed Jews, and will they halt content, until they have their damnable worship once more established in the sacred spot? Come, we will on to Haifa, and there we will show you the Immigration camps of these intruding Infidels, and the ships that bring them from the back-streets of Europe. Trust in your own leaders, Sons of the Faith, or else you will soon be wandering homeless, starving, with your wives and children dying of want. Come, on to Haifa!"

Abu George determined to ignore the great roll of undiscovered crimes that stood to the discredit of Nazareth, and to concentrate on the new ones that were daily reported. A few days after Musa's arrival a particularly callous murder was reported from Wadi Sharar. It appeared that two brigands on their way to carry out some *coup*, stopped at a garden to steal some fruit, and, when the watchman appeared on the scene, shot him out of hand. Within two hours of the report reaching him Abu George, Musa and a few troopers were upon the scene. Musa was at his most brilliant best, and walked carefully about the gardens, muttering his comments as he did so.

"Truly, *Effendi*, these robbers are cold-blooded. See, here, and here, and here. They stopped and finished their feed of fruit after they had killed the watchman. Look, they even paused to wipe their sticky hands on his clothing. Yes—they went this way, over this wall and through this cactus-hedge—Follow, *Effendi*,—here they stopped and lit cigarettes and looked back to see if there was any commotion in the huts around—This way,

*Effendi*,—they were walking, not troubling to run—*T'chk, t'chk!* Things must have been in a bad way in this district, *Effendi*, before they sent us here to make peace, for they are not even frightened of pursuit. This way, *Effendi*, they have headed towards Mount Tabor."

Then followed several hours of pursuit, Abu George and his men leading their horse across the hills in the wake of the tracker. On rocks where the officer could see nothing at all in the way of tracks, Musa led them forward. "Here, *Effendi*, they stopped and talked to three women, two married and one a virgin, gathering wood."

Abu George knew his man too well to ask him how he could tell the status of the females, he understood his man too intimately to doubt him.

"Here, Abu George *Effendi*," resumed Musa, a couple of miles farther along, "see, they stopped and took a short rest. They ate some bread and *dukka* (dried herbs), and smoked a cigarette. The men we want are one short and thick, the other a tall man who has at one time had an injury to his left foot."

As evening fell they were approaching Debouriyeh, the village nestling at the foot of Mount Tabor, after following a devious course through the hills. Abu George asked Musa if he thought that the brigands were in the village, but the Bedouin said he did not think so, as, from the marks of their footwear, they appeared to be men from Syria and would have no connection with the local inhabitants. They must have crossed the border to carry out some crime and then intended to get away as soon as possible. Doubtlessly they were now on their way to carry out the crime. Straight up the swelling breast of the mountain led the tracks, and, just as it

was getting too dark to see clearly they came on their quarry. Half-way round the eastern slope, they saw the glint of a small fire in a cave.

"See, *Effendi*, that is no shepherd's fire at this season of the year," whispered Musa. "The men are hiding and preparing food. At moonrise they will go on to their destination and carry out their plan. I expect they intend to rob some of the small Jewish colonies below us on the plain. To-day has been market-day in Afuleh and the colonists will have much money with them, ready to take into the Nazareth banks to-morrow."

Quietly, slowly, Abu George disposed his troopers, and then, accompanied only by Musa, he wormed his way through the short, dry scrub of the holy mountain, towards the cave-mouth. He discovered that the fire was only visible from one particular angle, that from which he had first seen it, and, in the growing darkness, he had some difficulty in forcing his burly person through the thorny shrubs. Close to the cave-mouth, twenty-five yards from the entrance, he unstrapped the powerful electric torch from his belt, drew his revolver, and then, lying flat on the ground, carefully trained the long case of the torch on to the cave-mouth. As soon as he judged it aligned, he switched on the dazzling beam, made an instant adjustment so that it shone straight into the brigands' lair, fixed it with a small stone, and rolled rapidly a few yards away from it. There was a scurry and some cursing from the murderers, and then he spoke :

"Surrender, Sons of Shame, I am the police officer in command of Nazareth. Surrender to me and you shall not be harmed, but shall have fair trial."

Immediately two rifles spat from the shadows, the bullets churned up the soil and whined away in a scream-

ing ricochet from beside the blazing torch. "Surrender or we fire," roared Abu George, willing to give them every chance. "You are surrounded and will be killed if you do not."

Another storm of bullets from the killers, some of them unpleasantly close to his head, for the men were firing towards the sound of his voice.

"*Uddrub, Fire,*" shouted Abu George, and emptied his pistol into the cave, noticing at the same time the rapid fire of Musa's rifle at his elbow. Half a dozen other shots rattled from the troopers' rifles, and then came a scream from the cave, followed by a guttural shout :

"I surrender, *Effendi*. Cease fire, and I will come out."

"Come out then, first throwing over your rifles and holding your hands above your heads. If you try any nonsense I will kill you at once."

A rifle was thrown out, and a figure appeared scrambling into the open.

"*Two* rifles, I said," shouted the officer.

"Mohammed is dead, *Effendi*," cried the survivor.

"Do you think the *Effendi* is a child, or new to this game of yours?" interjected Musa. "Dost think he will fall into so easy a trap? If Mohammed is dead, throw out his rifle, and then come yourself carrying him on your back."

It was true enough, one man, the tall, thin robber described by Musa was dead, hit by half-a-dozen shots, amongst which were no less than four of Abu George's pistol bullets. The other man, stumpy and thick-set, was promptly handcuffed, and the trek home commenced. But Abu George knew enough of Arab mentality to

## MUTTERINGS OF THE RISING STORM

make the most of his case. The corpse and the prisoner were taken back to Wadi Shara, and the dead murderer was laid beside the grave of the victim, who had been interred immediately after Abu George had commenced the pursuit. The prisoner was shown to the surrounding people and then sent on to Nazareth. But Abu George was not yet finished. Back he went with Musa and his men to the spot where the three women had spoken to the brigands, and followed their trail until it brought him to the outskirts of shattered Reneh village, the hamlet that had been almost wiped out by the earthquake of the preceding year. It was no difficult job to locate the women, who were as Musa had described them, and then Abu George administered a little lesson to the villagers on the necessity of reporting such untoward incidents as meeting armed men on the hills, to the police. The women of course, could not be touched, but their men-folk would be a good many years older before they forgot the sharpness of the lesson they received. Doubtless, they passed it on with interest to the women concerned when the police had left their village.

The next case was a big one of cattle "rustling." Practically the whole herd of a small colony was run off by cattle thieves from east of the Jordan. These reivers can drive stolen cattle with unbelievable speed, and it was three days before Abu George and the indefatigable Musa, came up with them at Khefr Kara in the foothills of Samaria. He returned to Nazareth to answer the enquiries from the Staff in regard to a spate of anonymous letters following on his capture of the murderers, and the lesson administered to the gentle people of Reneh.

Then rebellion nearly commenced all over the country, for some of the Nazareth *effendieh* spread a tale that the

## ARAB SLAVES AT SINGAPORE

British Government had kept back a large number of Arab prisoners-of-war, captured during Allenby's operations, and had sent them to India, from whence they had been taken to Singapore, and were employed as slaves on the building of the new fortifications. Thousands of Arabs were directly concerned as there were few families who had not had some member conscripted into the Ottoman armies, and who had never returned. The lying tale was fully believed and led to great meetings of protest and some minor rioting in the cities. It would have spread much further, for Rebellion was lying smouldering in the tense air of Palestine, had not Abu George had the good fortune to lay the originators of the rumour by the heels, and to get hold of the very man, a notable of Ailul village, who had been used by the Nazarenes as a catspaw to give truth to their foul lies. This man had actually been a prisoner of war, and had been sent to India, he was "a bad hat" and only too ready to help the *effendieh*.

Trouble now started in Kefr Mewa, a village close to Nazareth. In this place the inhabitants were divided into two parties, and a regular battle commenced. The weaker party were entrenched in a couple of houses, and were defending themselves against a great number of attackers. Rifles, revolvers and shot-guns were being freely used, whilst women and children were acting as ammunition columns. When Abu George and his men finally arrived, the place looked and sounded as though a desperate battle was being fought. He divided his men into two columns; one under Lazarovitch, to attack the men on the hills who were firing into the village; the other, under his own command, to do what street-fighting was necessary. There were several casualties, luckily

none of them fatal, lying around, and it was some hour and a half before he had the situation under control. Then that village was taught its lesson, and nearly all the male inhabitants were haled off to jail in Nazareth. Hardly was he back in his own quarters, before word was brought that fighting in the village had commenced again, this time between a few returned fugitives and the old men, whom he had thought incapable of causing trouble. This time he emptied the village of all males between nine and ninety, left a picket on the outskirts to keep the women quiet, and returned to get what sleep the remainder of the night permitted. Two days later he allowed them to return, but they went in a fashion that would ensure peace in their village for a considerable time to come.

For the next few weeks Abu George buzzed round his area like a particularly vicious and erratic wasp, stinging here, threatening there, making his presence felt by all and sundry. One threat to his power he nipped in the bud, a trooper and one of his night-watchmen were attacked and badly beaten, their arms and equipment stolen at Bir Bedawieh. The attackers were notorious outlaws who made great boast of what they had done to Abu George's men. Relentlessly he pursued them, finally, thanks to Musa, he got them and recovered the stolen arms, to the intense chagrin of the Nazarenes who had delighted in this insult to the man they feared.

A most brutal highway robbery occurred on the Nazareth-Sea of Galilee road. A motor-lorry was stopped by five armed brigands, and the only passenger, an aged, sick Moslem lady, on her way to receive treatment at the Tiberias hot-springs, was savagely raped by all the brigands in succession. Musa followed tracks that led

## TACTICS OF TORQUEMADA

Abu George and his men to Sedjira, the last halting-place of the Crusading army before the Battle of the Horns of Hattin on July 4th, 1187, and there he found an empty money bag, which was identified immediately by the driver of the lorry as his. The poor woman swore that she could easily identify her attackers if they were produced, and Abu George committed her to the care of the *mukhtar's* wife. The whole village of Sedjira was paraded at dawn, and the woman picked out three men of whom she was certain.

These three men were left in the charge of the native officer, who was told to find out what he could from them. Abu George returned to Nazareth knowing that the "investigations" would be only hampered by his presence. Such "investigations" follow a set course, one taught to the Arab troopers of the police by those of their number who served in the old Ottoman Gendarmerie and police. Torquemada, or the Court of Star Chamber, can have had little fresh to impart to your Palestine policeman determined to extract a confession, at least in the days of which I write, however much things may have been "modernized" in the last couple of years.

At eight that evening one of the men, Said Luwein, broke down and confessed his guilt. Abu George, warned by telephone, returned and brought him back to Nazareth and before a magistrate to tell his story before he could alter his mind. Said gave a detailed description of the attack upon the lorry, and of the horror practised on the unfortunate woman, and, when taken to the scene of the crime, reconstructed the attack completely and in no uncertain manner. Meanwhile one of the men detained for "questioning" at Sedjira, escaped and got to the Nazarene *effendieh*, who hailed his tale of torture as a

Heaven-sent opportunity to attack Abu George. Native lawyers appeared from nowhere, paid by the *effendieh*, and commenced causing trouble.

I do not wish to appear mealy-mouthed about this question of third-degree, I am only recording facts, but it is the only manner to obtain results in half the criminal cases of the Holy Land. People are so much in terror of criminals, and of the vengeance that will fall upon them if they give evidence, that the only course for a police officer to pursue, if he wishes to keep his area quiet, is to use counter-measures of terrorism. It is easy to act as many do: that is to use the methods which would be permissible in a western country, and, if these yield no result, as they generally do not, to fold one's arms and sit back, washing one's hands of all interest in the affair. That is easy, if you are willing to allow the decent people of your area to be terrorised, to allow brutal criminals to go scatheless, and if you wish to be considered a fool by the people for whom you are responsible; but, if you have the true interests of your folk at heart, you will take all measures to protect them, even if it means your professional ruin. That may sound like a defence of "third-degree" brutality, it is not meant to be, but merely an appreciation of the facts as they are.

The vernacular Press, ignoring the bestiality and cruelty of the crime, the fact that all outside evidence corroborated the confession of Said, and that the remainder of the prisoners, finding that Said had "ratted," fell over themselves in their desire to turn King's evidence, freely admitting their guilt, raised their loudest screams against Abu George. Only the fact that all the accused were found guilty by the Court and were sentenced to life

imprisonment, a sentence afterwards reduced to eighteen years' hard labour, saved him from the most unpleasant consequences.

The heart was taken out of him by the scant sympathy he received when attacked by the local Press, and continual enquiries from Jerusalem, sapped his determination to quieten Nazareth. But he ran down the murderers of a man in Mahlul village, and nipped the subsequent blood-feud in the bud. At Um Jeidel, a village on the main road, a girl was brutally attacked, and then, whilst defending her chastity, was stabbed and thrown into a manure pit, the manure afterwards being spread over her. Abu George heard of the case and arrived in time to discover the girl before she died, and had to sit in that festering hole taking her dying statement, as to move her would have caused her instant death. The assailant, deeming himself safe, was arrested in his house, and amongst eight others was brought to the pit, where the dying woman at once identified him.

*En route* to Nazareth he discussed his crime quite freely, although cautioned by Abu George in the formal manner, and expressed his conviction that he would escape with not more than two years' imprisonment. Abu George was delighted to make the trip to Acre, some weeks later, to act as official witness at his execution. But the officer, despite the simplicity of this case did not escape from the usual attack by the Nazarenes in both Press and *mazbata*, that he had indulged in "third-degree" methods.

Before leaving this sordid list of crime, a catalogue only recounted to give an idea of the state of things in this part of the Holy Land, I will deal with one more case, and the difficulty which faced Abu George, and every

other divisional officer of the Palestine Police, may be recognized.

Another attack by brigands was made on the traffic between Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, not very far from the scene of the crime against the aged Moslem woman. Musa diligently followed the tracks of the brigands, who were extremely clever and had laid their trail towards Sahel Batouf village, and had there attempted to lose them amongst the general confusion of the open market-place. However they had reckoned without Musa, he cast around the outskirts of the place, and again found the tracks heading towards Kefr Kenna (Cana of Galilee). The tracking party were a strange sight. They had started in the depth of night from the scene of the robbery, Musa following the tracks by the aid of a powerful paraffin arc-lamp, hissing and spluttering as it was borne by four convicts, followed by other convicts carrying supplies of oil and mantles, in case of accident. The brightly blazing lamp, and the men lit up by its light, would have been an ideal target for the brigands, but Abu George threw out flank-guards, as well as an advance party, to try and prevent any surprise. All went well, the criminals were too intent on making their escape, but it was a wonderful piece of work for Musa to do. With the dawn they came to Cana of Galilee, after covering nearly fifteen miles of cavious trails. Musa described all the fugitives and gave the length of their strides, pointed out where they had walked, where they had run, but in no place had they rested. This made the officer certain that the men were not professional brigands, but villagers who owned a few rifles and had gone out to take what they could. The tracks showed that there were four robbers all together,

and, twice, the police came across pieces of silver money as they marched. With Lazarovitch, Zahed Bseisso, and Tewfik Bishara, the officer in charge of Tiberias, Abu George surrounded Cana and made it impossible for anyone to leave, though his pickets were so posted that anyone could make unopposed entry.

It was not long before a man was identified by Musa as one of the people who had made the tracks. Meanwhile Abu George had set up his investigation room, in the hall of the Local Council, and the suspect was taken there. The doors and shutters were ostentatiously closed, a sergent significantly made his *kurbaj* whistle through the air, and the unhappy man shook as he looked into the four grim faces behind the table.

"Mercy, *Effendieh*, mercy," he shrieked, grovelling on the ground and attempting to kiss their feet.

He was spurned away, and remained snivelling on the floor.

"What ails you, man?" asked Abu George. "No one has offered to harm you, and yet you cry like a girl."

"*Effendi*, I know you and what you are like," he snivelled. "I will tell you all, if you will promise that I shall not be beaten."

He was promised that he should be safe, and then admitted his guilt, giving a complete story of the crime, afterwards leading the officers to his own house, where, removing a freshly plastered stone in the wall, he produced some money, a gold watch and a safety razor, which were immediately identified by one of the robbed men as his property. He then gave the names of his confederates and was taken off to Nazareth jail, to be medically examined in order that the usual reports of beating might be discounted.

The man that Abu George now wanted was one named Kerim Seffuriyeieh. He was immediately produced, but would admit nothing, and a thorough search of his house produced no evidence of guilt. Sitting opposite Abu George in the Investigation room, the officer suddenly asked his corporal, a grim old veteran, Ahmed Naif, if there was any other place that should be searched. The corporal answered ;

“ Yes, *Effendi*, we have not looked amongst the *tibbin* (chaff) in his barn.”

The prisoner gave an almost imperceptible start, yet very clearly seen by the searching blue eyes across the table. Kerim stoutly denied his guilt. Again there was no need of the methods of the Inquisition, for his shoes, newly cleaned, showed traces of a peculiar red clay only found at the place of the robbery ; more was found on his feet, a fact which discounted his first assertion that the shoes had been worn for several days by his aged father.

Meanwhile a roll-call of the village had been made, and eight men were missing ; though, after a few hours, all except one were accounted for. The brother of the missing man was an ex-convict who had been a notorious brigand in Turkish times. He denied all knowledge of his brother, but, being brought into the Investigation room, took advantage of an offer to produce the missing man before nine that night. Once more Abu George's reputation held good, the wanted man appeared and made full confession. All that now remained was to get hold of the stolen property to fix the guilt of the brigands. A great pretence was made of searching a cave on the hillside to the north of Cana, but Abu George returned when half-way there, leaving Tewfik Bishara to continue

the mock search, and went quickly to Kerim's house. There under the *tibbin* was found the remnant of the plunder. The family looked their dismay, they were obviously innocent ; but Kerim's protestations that Abu George had himself placed the loot there, stood him in no stead when he, in due course, appeared before the Court, and with his confederates, now made up to the required number, by their eagerness to turn King's evidence, received a long-term sentence. Kerim was a real hard case, he had absconded from his service as a police-trooper years before, taking horse and rifle with him, though the Nazarenes, angry under the growing prestige of Abu George in the district, did their utmost to portray him as a Nationalist hero, fighting usurping Britain and her powers. A strenuous attempt was made to identify this case with the attack on the woman by the Sejira people but failed, as did, after prolonged and intense annoyance to Abu George, and the writing of many reams of official reports, their charge that he had used methods of terrorism in this case.

Animal thefts were finally stopped by another extraordinary feat of Musa's. Two stolen mules were followed for over forty-five miles by Lazarovitch and the tracker, and, though the thieves got away to their native Syria, the beasts were recovered and restored to their owners, after which the professional reivers decided that Abu George's district was best left alone.

Abu George went on a patrol that took him towards the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, he was in hot pursuit of an armed gang of Bedouin which had been robbing the fields of some of the Jewish colonies in his Division. To his intense disgust, though he had forced them to abandon the herd of sheep that they were

MUTTERINGS OF THE RISING STORM driving, and which he had recaptured, the thieves had made good their escape across the Jordan fords. Three days in the saddle had not sweetened his disposition, and he was glad when he ordered his troopers to slacken girths, and take a rest beside the outflow of the Jordan, close to the Semakh bridge, before riding the remainder of the distance into Tiberias, farther up the Lake.

Whilst they were there a large party, some eighty car-loads, of tourists, mainly Americans, off some cruise ship in Haifa Roads, came to a dust-blinding stop, close to the halted police. Out got some three hundred men and women and trooped down to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where as usual they were addressed by the guides :

"Ladees and Gentlemenn, here you see the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, or Lake Tiberias or Lake Gennesareth. On your right is the sacred river of Jordan, which here you see at the best advantage, for within one mile it becomes yellow and dirty, as you have already seen it close to the Dead Sea, when you took Sight-seeing Trip No. B4, three days before. On your left is the site of the ancient Jewish city of Taricchae, destroyed by Titus Caesar, etc. etc. etc."

Abu George and his men watched them with some amusement. They all did what was expected of them ; asked fatuous questions, clicked their Kodaks, whirled their pocket ciné cameras, and made notes in pocket diaries. Suddenly one of the troopers, sitting to one side, away from the tourist party, gave a yell.

"*Dir Balkhum, hiy wahid kelb majnoone!* (Guard yourselves, mad dog!"). It was true enough. Along the beach was rushing a slavering, rabid Arab cur,

evidently belonging to one of the small Bedouin encampments strung along the foreshore.

Abu George saw the danger at once—if the dog got amongst the tourists many of them would be bitten before they could manage to evade it. With the ease of long practice, he whipped his pistol out of its holster, and, as the dog, dumb in its awful madness, rushed past him, dropped it dead with a merciful bullet through the brain.

There was an immediate uproar amongst the assembled tourists. Most of them were Americans, and it was not by any means one of the more expensive tours that visit the Holy Land. Their imaginations were probably already very much inflamed from the historic place in which they stood, the sight of romantically dressed Arabs and the lurid fiction regarding sheikhs and Bedouins which so many travellers of this kind indulge in. The sound of the sudden revolver shot convinced them that they stood in peril of an attack by brigands, anxious to hold them to ransom. Doubtlessly they had heard tales of native soldiery suddenly turning on innocent wayfarers, and they took Abu George and his men for some of the dreaded Bashi-Bazouks. In any case they surged towards the police party, and one man, a short, portly Mid-Westerner, who looked as though he might be some sort of a preacher, constituted himself spokesman.

“What do you mean by firing shots towards us?” he demanded. “I warn you, sir, that I will report this matter to the nearest United States Consul.”

Abu George pointed to the dog, and explained that he had been forced to kill it because he was afraid that it would get amongst the tourists, and probably cause some of them to contract hydrophobia. But nothing that he

could say would convince the man, or his friends, that they had been in any danger.

Abu George's troopers, their dignity outraged in seeing their officer being so flagrantly insulted by a mob of mere civilians, and Christians at that, began to murmur that it was time he gave them orders to arrest the whole cruise-party. They did not understand the language used, but there was no mistaking the angry gestures of the pompous little man, who, by this time, had worked himself into an ecstasy of rage against this uniformed Turk, as he believed Abu George to be.

"I'll have your name, my man," he concluded. "I am going to send a full report of this affair to your commanding officer. I am not going to have my people subjected to the danger of flying bullets by any native policeman who cares to discharge his pistol. What's your name, and that of your commanding officer? I am sure that he is English, and he will see that such a shameful thing as this will never occur again."

This was not so funny. Of course Abu George could easily explain what had happened, but it would take a good many sheets of official foolscap and a long and tiresome correspondence with Headquarters, before all was done, and he had had more than enough of that.

He assumed an air of meekness, begged the irate man not to do so, an attitude that encouraged the tourist to become more truculent than ever. Again he demanded the officer's name, and Abu George replied:

"My name is Bukhra Effendi fil Mish-mish" (an Arab colloquialism for "never," literally "to-morrow when the apricots come"). "My commanding officer's name is Major-General Edwin Bryant"—Abu George's real name,

though by no means his rank—"and he is stationed at Nazareth."

The little man wrote down the two names most carefully in his pocket-book, making sure of the spelling. As he snapped the elastic band, and returned it to his pocket, he looked severely at the burly figure in khaki, saying :

"I don't want to be hard on you, my man, but I am going to report this affair to your Major-General, because I believe that white people visiting this Holy Land of Palestine, wishful to tread in the footsteps of the Master, should be protected from such erratic natives as you appear to be. I hope that you will learn some kindness for dumb animals as well as for your fellow humans, and, maybe, this trouble will turn your eyes towards the True Light and make a good Christian of you. What?"

"There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Apostle of God. God he is Greatest," answered Abu George piously.

In due course a letter appeared on Abu George's desk, addressed to Major-General Edwin G. Bryant, and bearing a long complaint against the Turkish officer, Bukhra Effendi fil Mish-mish, most of it completely untrue, but evidently the sincere and honest opinion of the pompous little American tourist. It demanded the officer's instant and condign punishment, pointing out the enormity of his offence in endangering the sacred lives of white people, and his sadistic cruelty in wantonly shooting down a harmless dog. To which requests he replied that he had interrogated the officer in question, had fined him three months' pay, and warned him that, if he interfered with tourists again, or tried to save them from mad dogs, he would be extremely sorry for himself,

MUTTERINGS OF THE RISING STORM  
and signed himself as Major-General commanding the Nazareth Command.

For months after that there was a package each mail-day from America, containing tracts addressed to Bukhra Effendi fil Mish-mish, counselling submission to his fate, learning from mistakes, and demonstrating the errors of the Creed of Islam.

But Tragedy was beginning to stalk openly through Palestine, the growls of the rising storm were becoming more distinct, the storm-centre was growing nearer. There were no troops in the country, nothing but the Palestine Police, with a tiny British section of about 125 other ranks, mainly stationed in the cities. The peasants had not seen the British uniform for many months, the only sign of force they ever encountered were the British Divisional police officer, with his Arab troopers at his back. The trouble-makers and agitators found fruitful soil to sow their seed. It was easy to convince the peasants and Bedouin that the British had practically evacuated the country. From thence it was only a step to say that this had been done purposely in order to demonstrate the Government's sympathy with Arab Nationalist aims, and its hatred of all things Jewish. "Was not the Administration at Jerusalem trying its best to give them a quiet hint to go ahead with the massacre of these Jewish dogs who were slowly filching their land from them? They had only to look around to be sure of this, for had not all the sealed armouries of the colonies been taken away and the Jews left entirely defenceless? Had there been any serious attempt to stop gun-running or to disarm the Arabs? Were there not plenty of arms and ammunition in every village? Then, onwards, strike a blow for the Faith, before the Zionists did for

Jerusalem and the other cities what they had already done to Afuleh! Did they want to see the great sanctuaries of Islam in Jerusalem profaned by the foul ritual of Judah? Straws clearly showed which way the rising gale was blowing straws that were only too obvious to all, and did the Government, who must see them as clearly as anyone else, do anything about it? Of course not," ranted the agitators, "for it is on their side, that of truth and justice. Did not all the world know that the *Ingliz* hated the Jews as much as any race in the world? They had to truckle to them because of their great debts to Jewish financiers incurred during the War, but they would be as glad as anyone else to be rid of their ungrateful, troublesome protégés." Public Security fell to a very low ebb, hundreds of murders occurred every year, and less than a dozen people expiated their crimes on the scaffold. "Were not the taxes higher than they had ever been? Were not people more pressed down now than ever they had been in Turkish days? Get rid of the Jews first and then we shall drive the *Ingliz* out as well. Then will come the great happiness of having a National Government, and everything will be prosperous and bright again. Islam had sinned, that was why Allah had allowed the Infidels to conquer them, but now the time had come for the old Faith to rehabilitate itself."

This was the type of thing that was happening all over the country, and it was brought home more clearly than ever to Abu George, when, one midnight, he was called out of his bed to find the murdered corpse of the Arab officer whom he loved as a brother, Zahed Effendi Bseisso, stabbed to death whilst trying to stop a row in one of the streets of Nazareth.

Feelings ran high at once, for the members of the dead officer's clan arrived in force from Gaza, and, naturally, wanted vengeance on the cowardly Nazarenes, but Abu George avoided an open battle by quietly dispatching the corpse by automobile the following midnight, bound for the dead man's southern home. You may judge of his disgust when he found that he had to pay the hire of the hearse for that hundred-and-fifty-mile journey out of his own pocket, through, in his anxiety to keep the peace, having failed to comply with some regulation. What made matters worse was that when the murderer was brought to trial he escaped with a sentence of eleven years.

And now with the murmurings of the rising storm ever clearer, a fresh wave of crimes of violence shook unhappy Palestine. Even in Abu George's well-policed division there were many highway robberies and attacks on travellers, whilst every night could be heard sporadic firing, where the *fellahin* were practising for the Trouble that everyone knew was imminent.

Quietly, unostentatiously, Abu George prepared for it. He paid visit after visit to his scattered Jewish colonies, and advised them what to do in case of attack. He worked out a secret system of signalling, by which the outlying settlements could immediately summon aid. He provided against the certainty that all telephone and telegraph wires would be cut at the first outbreak, and did all that he could to ensure their safety when the hour struck.

In his Daily Intelligence Summary he emphasized the necessity for reinforcements, pointed to the huge black clouds that lay along the political horizon, but met with seeming indifference, and certainly received no reinforcements.

## NAZARETH ASSASSINATION

He felt like the captain of a ship, with all the portents of a brooding hurricane around him, feels. But he drew the same consolation; he had battened down everything and made all the preparations in his power, and now he could only trust to the staunchness of his ship to weather the storm under the skill of his own controlling hand.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### ‘ ‘ HURRICANE ’ ’

SOME months before this time I had had the bad luck to have been in charge of the police party that pulled down a screen erected between the male and female Jewish worshippers at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Through this incident most of the political differences that the Arabs cherished against the Jews had been brought to a festering head. The Moslems had seized upon the incident as proof positive that the Zionists intended to seize the Sacred Shrines of the Faith and re-convert them to the usage of Israel. Photographs were circulated showing the Zionist flag flying over the great dome of the rock, the mighty mosque hallowed by the miraculous visitation of the Prophet, which covers the site of the ancient Holy of Holies on Mount Moriah. That the pictures were crude fakes, with the Zionist flag most transparently added afterwards, did not mean a thing to the *fellahin* and Bedouins amongst whom they were circulated. The camera could not lie as far as they were concerned, newly introduced to the machine as they were.

I had fallen into grievous disfavour with the Jewish section of the population in my division of Jerusalem, for, at the time, they did not realize, as they did afterwards, that the unfortunate affair had been none of my

## TROUBLES IN JERUSALEM

seeking and that I had been forced to act as I had done by the urgent orders of higher authority. Wherever I went in the city I was met, either by angry, furious looks from the Jews, or, if I was in an isolated part of the town, by boos and hisses. The Moslems, on the other hand, looked on me as a saviour of Islam, and my stock at the time was tremendously high with them. However, the position was impossible, the jeers of one side were as galling as the cheers of the other, and I was more than glad when I was transferred to the command of a penal settlement on the Plain of Armageddon.

But things gradually grew from bad to worse in the capital. It was obviously impossible to bring me back to Jerusalem. I should have refused to go in any case, yet I had had the town mob in such subjection that a strong substitute for myself was necessary. Abu George was sent. He had a terrible time, for the mob thought he was me. Worst of all he was sent down in charge of the Wailing Wall throughout a long day of festival and the Jewish worshippers thought that he was the hated Duff. He had such a devil of a time that he stamped angrily up to Headquarters and demanded an instant return to Nazareth and comparative peace. When the local Press on one side raised a scream the next day that I, of all people, had been returned to duty in Jerusalem, and the other faction loudly cheered the Government for bringing me back, Headquarters were only too willing to send Abu George to his own station.

The atmosphere was electric, everyone knew that Trouble, Big Trouble was upon us. It felt like the oily calm before the hurricane breaks, when one can already see the long white line of the approaching wind stretched along the horizon under the dark, supercharged, coppery

pall of sky. There was nothing to be done by an officer of police in a remote town who had made what preparations he could. Now was the time to have rushed up a battalion and some armoured-cars from the garrison of Egypt. It could have been easily done under the pretence of manœuvres—there need have been no fear that the Moslems would be enraged by an overt display of force, but no one seemed willing to take the responsibility. Understandable maybe, we were living, now as always, on the top slopes of a volcano, and we were used to feeling the ground heave beneath us. We knew that we were holding the cap on the fires below merely by our own weight. It was easy to believe, if you were in Jerusalem, surrounded by all the carefully and pathetically erected camouflage that one was in England, to miss feeling the extreme menace that was abroad, but Abu George, and others like him, in the outside districts, knew only too well. An extra rumble of the volcano meant very little to those out of direct touch with native sentiment ; after all, there had been so many heavings of the smouldering mass that had been finally controlled.

Hardly was Abu George back in Nazareth before the first gusts of the storm started to shriek around his head. In the streets he was no longer greeted with the servile civility which the Nazarenes, in fear and hatred, had accorded him, gone was the false good-fellowship which they had displayed, and everywhere he met truculent faces and eyes no longer afraid. Within two hours of his arrival occurred the first incident, an Arab, trespassing on Jewish land, had turned murderously on a Jewish settler who had ordered him to take his cattle off the threshing-floor, where they were eating the threshed grain of the colony. The Jew, to save his own life, had fired and

## CIVIL WAR

wounded the Arab with his shot-gun. The man was not seriously hurt as the colonist had been careful to fire at his legs, and he was given immediate medical attention. Simultaneously with the report came a telephone message from Jerusalem to say that general street-fighting had broken out in the capital.

The day passed quietly, so quietly that it was believed that the news from Jerusalem would serve as a restraint on a local Rising. Every man who wanted to fight the Jews would be rushing up to Jerusalem to die, if need be, in the defence of Islam's Holy Places. So certain of this were District Headquarters, that the available British police were rushed up to Jerusalem to assist the few men in the depôt on Mount Scopus to restore order. In the whole of northern Palestine, from Samaria to the Syrian border, we had only seven British officers and four other ranks as a force upon which we could rely.

Abu George had no other British with him, though he was backed by two excellent officers in Lazarovitch and Langer—Zahed Effendi's death was all the more regretted for the tower of strength that he would have been. Fortunately he believed that he could trust his Arab constables to follow him anywhere. Their tails were definitely up, their prestige had been so heightened by his leadership that they had achieved a complete and sovereign contempt for the mere civilian, and they were, he was sure, prepared to obey his every order. It was not long before he put them to the severest test.

At nine o'clock, on the evening of his arrival, a very worried Abu George, already tired by his long day spent investigating the shooting incident of the early morning, and his hurried tour around the villages and colonies to acquaint himself with the situation, as well as by his

very early start, at about 3 a.m. from Jerusalem, was in the Galilee Hotel at Nazareth. There he met Maikin of the Survey Department, and asked him what he had noticed during his journey. Suddenly the telephone rang, and the anxious-faced German landlord bustled in and told him that Jenin police wanted him on the line. They reported that a party of three hundred armed Arabs had left that town, and were now *en route* to attack the central Jewish colony of Afuleh, swearing that they would leave neither man, woman nor child alive in the settlement.

He hastily gulped down his John Haig, and, dashing down the long stone staircase, clambered into his car, and raced for the Barracks. From there he telephoned his outpost at Afuleh, telling Langer to evacuate all the colonists into the cinema theatre, the only building big enough to hold them all, which was admirably suited for defence. It was useless to try and hold the colony itself, it straggled over too much ground to lend itself to defence by a small number of men.

Every available car in Nazareth was commandeered, packed with police and supplies, and off dashed the convoy the nine miles to Afuleh. In the colony Abu George made his dispositions for defence, told the colonists what was expected of them, and placed Langer in command of the mixed garrison of police and settlers. Then he, with his Nazareth troopers, pushed on along the main road, in order to engage the attackers before they could enter the outskirts of the township, and cause untold damage.

He took up his position along the railway, about a mile towards Jenin, and spread his men along in a thin firing-line, with a small reserve on the road itself to hasten to any threatened point of the line, and also to

protect the convoy of cars from any flank attack advancing over the open plain. The cars were turned round to face towards Afuleh, in order to ensure a rapid retreat in case of necessity. There was sufficient moon to give all the light that was necessary, and, anxiously, Abu George strode up and down his little line. All told he had less than forty men. An advanced picket, under Lazarovitch, was posted one mile down the road, with one car, and orders to retire on to the main body as soon as they were certain that the rebels were approaching. They were to get into their car, taking great care to avoid letting the Arabs know that there were police on the road, and to give the impression that, if they were not innocent bystanders, at most, they were terror-stricken Jewish colonists. Under no circumstances, unless they were surrounded, were they to open fire.

Abu George stumped up and down, almost invisible in his long, dark-blue overcoat, yarning and talking with his troopers in an endeavour to find out how far they could be relied on to fire upon their own countrymen, and brothers in religion, in defence of Jewish colonists. To one man, an old Arab of Beit Jibrin, he addressed the question directly :

“ *Effendi*, what are these men of the north country to us ? ” The fiercely whiskered veteran of every war that Turkey had fought since the beginning of the century replied : “ We are all men who come from south of Jerusalem. These dogs of *Shemalis*, northerners, mean nothing to us. Even if they did, and were men of our own villages, still must we, Wearers of the Coat of *Melik George*, stand true to our pledged word. Have no fear, Abu George Bey, we, your men, are behind you and will fire as you order, knowing that you will take all blame

upon yourself, so that the blood-feud shall not follow upon poor soldiers doing their duty.”

In fact, the blood-feud and its terrible consequences is all that bothers your Arab policeman worth his salt. For this reason you will find that, when he is alone on patrol, it is extremely seldom that he kills a brigand or other criminal. But, if he has a British officer with him, he is only too glad to do his duty to the utmost, knowing that the officer, who will not live all the years of his life in Palestine, will joyfully shoulder the blame of the killings. This may also explain why decorations for gallantry are not prized amongst the rank and file : it makes the wearer too conspicuous, and signals him out for the later attentions of the dead man’s family. In any case your Arab Moslem is an intense and very sober realist, and values a bit of worked metal and a scrap of coloured ribbon at its intrinsic value, and cannot conceive any sentimental reason why he should unduly expose himself for the barren honour of being allowed to tack a piece of coloured silk on his tunic. He has seen too much of it. For instance, there is a street beggar in Hebron, who wears the ribbon of the King’s Police Medal for great gallantry in the Southern Desert, who puts the medal onto his ragged jacket when some great personage is visiting the town in order to gain money for the family who starve with him. “ No,” argues your Arab trooper, “ I want no medals. They only bring trouble in their wake. Arab officers are jealous of seeing a medal on the breast of a man below them. Has any man won promotion, and thereby more pay, through winning a medal ? ” The chance to earn extra pay is the reason for the presence of most of them in the ranks, jointly with the privilege of being able to bear arms as did their fathers before them.

## LINE OF BATTLE

Suddenly Abu George missed Musa, and asked if anyone had seen him. A sergeant replied that the old Bedouin had crept away as soon as the line was formed, and had disappeared into the night, evidently gone forward to scout. An hour passed quietly, whilst Abu George strained every nerve, listening to each sound that came across the dimly seen moonlit vistas of the great plain. A walk along his line showed him that most of his men, with the stoicism of Islam, were fast asleep, relying entirely upon their officer to wake them to battle as soon as it was necessary. At the end he found grizzled Sergeant Ali Mahmoud and his much younger brother, together with Hafiz, the sergeant's son, listening intently towards the flank, and stopped to speak to them in an undertone. On the other flank was a young Russian, a man transferred from the Palestine Gendarmerie on the disbandment of that Force, and, nominally, a Palestinian by naturalization. He was wide awake and was keeping a keen watch on his front. A queer fellow this Russian, he had been an officer in one of the Cossack regiments of the Czar, and had left Russia after a last desperate service in the forces of Admiral Koltchak. By some means, known only to himself, he had drifted down across Asia Minor, until he had crossed the Palestine-Syria frontier where, finding the Palestine Gendarmerie very much to his taste, had enlisted, and then accepted further service as a trooper in the Palestine Mounted Police, where he now had reached the dignity of wearing two chevrons on his sleeve.

The Russian grinned at his officer as he saw him approach, and then spoke in flawless English :

"Is this going to be much of a show, sir? Do you think that the Arabs will fight?"

“ I hope not, Kleminoff,” replied Abu George ; “ we have not got enough men to do more than make a bluff. If they come on with any determination at all we shall have to retreat into Afuleh.”

“ Yes, sir, and what then ? ”

“ Well. Make the best of it, I suppose,” answered the officer. “ We can hold out there until we are relieved. Troops are bound to arrive in a few days if the Rising makes any headway.”

“ That’s very true, sir. But if we are pinned in Afuleh what will happen in Nazareth and the remaining colonies ? If the Arabs have any sense, that is just what they will do : leave enough men to hold us, and then loot everything else that they can lay their hands upon.”

“ Well, what do you suggest ? ” asked Abu George, knowing his man. “ You seem to be very concerned about the remainder of the colonies.”

“ I, personally, don’t care a damn about them,” replied the corporal. “ They mean nothing to me. I was only thinking that it would look bad for us to let them fall into their hands, make us appear inefficient. As far as the colonists are concerned they can paddle their own canoe, but it makes our work look untidy.”

“ Well ? ”

“ Well, sir, after all, we have not enough men to protect both lives and property. Property can be won back again, lives cannot. Why stay here, where both our flanks can be turned and ourselves driven in disorder into Afuleh ? If this occurs, it will encourage the Arabs tremendously, and all the Bedouin on the Plain, who are at present hanging fire, will join in and help besiege us in the cinema at Afuleh. When that happens we shall have lost the property in any case, and be worse off ourselves

than we were at the start. May I suggest, sir, that we move forward and take the initiative? Let us prepare an ambush at some spot on the road where the rebels must pass. Forgive me making these suggestions, sir, but you know I am fairly experienced in this type of warfare, and, after all, you have no other white man with whom to discuss the situation."

"I know, Kleminoff, that is why I have asked you," said Abu George; "but there is no place on this Plain where we can lay an ambush, at least not one that we can reach in time. On top of that, if I move out, and do not make contact with them, and some other village attacks Afuleh whilst we are gone, there will be an unholy outcry in Jerusalem. I think——"

As he was about to outline his proposals, Kleminoff stiffened quickly and threw his rifle forward, but, before he had time to challenge, a dark figure rose from the ground, and with a quiet laugh said:

"You keep a good watch, Russian. Abu George Bey, had I wished to kill you I could have done so easily, as I heard your voices when I first approached the position." It was Musa, returned from his expedition into the night.

"Where have you been, Musa?" demanded Abu George. "It is well that I am the officer who is with you, for, if you were with another, he would punish you for leaving the line without orders."

"I would not be with any other officer of the *Ingliz*," gravely pointed out Musa. "You know why I am here, *Effendi*, and you know who sent me to serve you. The Arabs of Jenin district will not attack Afuleh to-night, Abu George Bey," he continued.

Abu George was thunderstruck. "What do you mean?"

“ Nay, *Effendi*, I meant no harm to your pride, but I thought that this was a matter best settled by an Arab with Arabs. In the hours that I have been missing from my post,” and he paused to grin maliciously at his officer, “ I went into Jezreel, and saw the notables. There I described myself as a great friend of those heroes of our race who wish to exterminate the Jew. I did not wish to see my brothers in the Faith run into a trap. I described the great force of police and the many machine-guns that were awaiting them near Afuleh. They agreed to do their best to turn back the army of rebels that was advancing along the road. By the time that I finished speaking to the *mukhtar* and notables we could hear them singing and shouting as they marched. I stayed in the village, but I could hear the notables talking to the Jenin men, and, *Effendi*, the number of men and machine-guns that I had mentioned was more than doubled by those good friends of mine. It was only a few minutes before the rebels scattered and started back for Jenin.”

Abu George could hardly believe his ears. He kept his men in position until dawn, and then went forward in a fast Studebaker car to see if the road was really clear. Above the last *wady*, near the 115th kilometre stone, he saw the rebels, in the light of early morning, streaming back into Jenin. Returning to Afuleh he informed the colonists of what had happened, but let them fully understand that this was merely the first gust of the storm. Throughout the day, realizing the value of the time he had before the Arabs plucked up heart of grace, he was here, there and everywhere on the Plain of Armageddon, forcing the settlers in the smaller colonies to evacuate their settlements and come in to Afuleh. By nightfall all the weaker colonies were empty, and long lines of lorries,

## M U S A ' S   B L U F F

farm-carts and camels were trekking across the flat land towards the central settlement, bearing food and as much of their valuables as the people could carry.

With the great influx of people into Afuleh the available garrison swelled tremendously. Whilst the outsiders had been coming in, the Afuleh people, men and women alike, had been busy all day constructing defences on lines that Abu George marked out for them in the morning. Klemi-noff, the Russian corporal, remained as engineer-in-charge and, by the time that the officer returned in the evening, the settlement was fairly adequately defended with trenches, strong points and barbed-wire fences.

As the last glow of sun faded from the rounded summit of Mount Tabor, the new basilica on its summit shining with the final gleams, Abu George called a meeting in the cinema; ordering all men capable of bearing arms to attend with whatever weapons, firearms or otherwise, that they possessed. Some four hundred sturdy young *Halutzim*, Jewish pioneers, their muscles mighty with their hard toil on the ungrateful soil, packed the building, and nearly three-quarters of them carried shot-guns, with which they were accustomed to keep their farmyards clear from predatory jackals and birds. Ammunition was woefully scant, none of the young colonists could afford to keep much of a store, but it worked out at about forty rounds of sporting-cartridges per man when the total was pooled and equally divided. Defence would have been far easier if the Rising had occurred some time before, as then most colonies still possessed the sealed armouries of rifles and ball-cartridge with which they had been armed. These, however, in response to Arab agitation, had been removed by a Government ever-anxious to pour oil on the troubled waters of the moment.

Undoubtedly, had the colonies been still so armed, the Arabs would have thought long and wisely before they dared to launch an attack, but they knew perfectly well that now they had no long-range weapons to fear, other than the few rifles that the police had, and even they, it was fully realized, had no machine-guns at all, other than the few that the British section possessed, and they were busily engaged in quelling disorder in Jerusalem. The time was indeed ripe for a grand attack that would drive the Jews into the sea. The Arabs themselves were in possession of plenty of arms; every village had dozens of rifles, both British weapons and Mausers that they had retrieved from the battlefields of the late War. Hundreds of automatic pistols of the latest type had been smuggled into Palestine, both on the unprotected seashore and across the land frontiers, in the months preceding the Rising, and there was plenty of ammunition to hand. There were even strong rumours of several machine-guns in the hands of the rebels, though, fortunately, these were never brought into action.

Abu George realized only too well that any steps he might take to prevent a general massacre of his colonists would only be effective for a few days, and that, if Imperial troops did not quickly arrive, Nazareth Division would be a blood-stained shambles. Fortunately the colonists with whom he had to deal were young, tough and courageous; there was no faltering so far as they were concerned. They were quite ready to die in the last ditch to protect their homes from plunderers, and their women-folk from outrage. Many of the girls, as hardy as their male comrades, showed their readiness to handle arms in the same cause. The trouble was that military weapons were non-existent, shot-guns are of little avail against

high-velocity rifles. Abu George commenced to lecture them in Arabic, the *lingua-franca* of all races in the Holy Land, but soon found that most of his audience, although familiar with the Arabic terms in ordinary use in agriculture, were unable to follow him, whereupon he started again in French, and allowed an interpreter to turn his words into Hebrew, and then Yiddish. He told them of the folly of stirring from their defences, which were now as strong as they could reasonably be expected to be, pointing out that the Arabs would only have to await their attack from a point far outside the range of their sporting guns, and mow them down as they came on. Their weapons, he pointed out, were excellently suited to defence, especially when the enemy came to close quarters, but worse than useless in any game of long bowls. Let them keep their women and children inside the concrete and stone house, and they would be safe from rifle-fire so long as they lay on the floor and did not come opposite any window or door, and steadfastly man their defences themselves.

Then, in the gathering darkness, he begged them to maintain discipline to the leaders he was about to ask them to choose, and, above all, to obey implicitly the Jewish officer that he was going to leave in supreme command of the settlement. He quoted the old analogy of the match-box, one stick easily snapped, the lot together unbreakable, and pleaded with them to forgo their usual sturdy independence of action for the nonce, and agree to act as soldiers during the emergency.

The colonists readily agreed, and then the men who possessed shot-guns were detailed into six companies of approximately fifty strong. They chose their own company-commanders and section leaders, and were rapidly

formed into four sections per company. In supreme command of this armed party Abu George placed his Russian, Corporal Kleminoff. A second line of defence was then formed, consisting of another four companies, each about seventy strong, armed with farm implements that would serve as weapons—scythe-blades, timber-axes, pitch-forks, sharpened spades, iron crow-bars and the like—and these in turn elected their own leaders.

Flaring lux-lamps were now brought in, as Abu George completed his arrangements by forming a party of young and brawny lasses into a fire-brigade, whose duty would be to extinguish any blaze that might occur during an attack. The older women were put under the charge of the colony doctor and his nursing-staff, to act as stretcher-bearers and first-aid party. The old men, who were not fit for employment in the fighting-line, formed themselves into a ration and supply party, and also undertook to act as sentries to give the fighting-men every chance to conserve their strength. Abu George told two of the firearm companies to act as escorts to any party of stragglers that might yet have to come in from the surrounding hamlets, and also to be ready to be used, in the last resort, as rescue-party for any of the larger colonies that might need aid. There were sufficient horses, both in the colony and amongst those brought in from the smaller settlements, to mount about one hundred men, and consequently two of the firearm companies were detailed as cavalry, and these would be the expeditionary force if need arose.

He was loudly cheered by the hundreds present as he finished his speech and dispositions, and then explained that he would visit them as often as he could, but that he had to get about his division and also see to things in

Nazareth itself. He advised them to spend the next day in still further consolidating their defence-works, and then, in the total darkness, bade them farewell. He was amused to see, as he left the hall, that Kleminoff, evidently in spirit once again an officer of Cossacks, was drilling his volunteer companies, with the idea of getting them to work as a whole.

By now Abu George had commandeered as much motor transport as would suffice to carry the whole of his small police force. He told me, long afterwards, that he had the utmost trepidation in doing so, as he was quite certain that Headquarters, when peace was restored, would certainly try to make him pay for it all out of his own pocket, but, he explained, when he worked out the bill for hiring on the ninth day of his operations, and found that it was in the region of £3,000, he ceased to worry. They could not make him pay it if they wished to. "You can't get blood out of a stone," he chuckled.

Things were now moving quickly and violently. Returning up the steep road to Nazareth, with his convoy of cars behind him, each carrying three armed police, one beside the driver and two in the back, the most that could be carried and yet retain fighting efficiency, he found the town in turmoil. A mob, armed and angry, was demonstrating outside the *serai* and demanding the instant surrender of some prisoners whom he had arrested earlier in the day. He arrived in time to smash that little effort in the bud, the sight of the police bayonets glinting evilly in the flicker of the street-lamps was more than enough for the town rats. There were no Jews in Nazareth, the few who lived there had evacuated the town, and, consequently he expected little trouble, but he took the precaution of going round to several houses

in which lived the people whom he knew would cause trouble, most of them he had seen in the demonstration outside the *serai*, and placed them in the cells.

Within ten minutes half the native lawyers of Nazareth were besieging his office, threatening *habeas corpus* and the direst penalties of the law if the prisoners were not instantly released. Abu George countered by putting the lawyers themselves behind the bars, and grinned cheerily at their foaming faces when he passed through the courtyard, on his way home to see how his own people were faring. He found them in a terrible state of alarm. All day the most vivid rumours had been reaching his wife. He had been killed ; he had been captured by Arabs and was to be tortured to death ; he was being held as a hostage by the rebels, and they were to be killed themselves if he dared to take any steps against the rebels. Calling two of his cars, Abu George sent his family down to Haifa under heavy escort, where there was a strong enough white population to protect European women and children from harm. Mrs. Bryant protested vigorously. She wished to stand by her husband ; but when he pointed out that she would only cause him extra anxiety and cramp his work by remaining, as he would have to be away from the town, she reluctantly consented and entered the waiting car. Abu George heaved a great sigh of relief, and turned about to tackle some supper. Half-way through it came a report that several of the smaller colonies on the Plain were ablaze, and that there was the sound of heavy firing from Abu Shushe, a settlement not in his division, nestling under the Samaritan foothills. Sniping was also taking place around Afuleh. Strangely enough the Arabs did not cut the telephone lines, and he was able to talk to Langer, his officer, at the latter place,

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and found that there was no cause for anxiety; the defences were manned and the volunteers were steady and ready for all eventualities. Langer reported at dawn that several of the colonies towards Beisan were being heavily attacked and that help would have to be sent, as they were sending up S.O.S. flares and rockets.

All was quiet in the town as he and his convoy of men sped through the deserted street and commenced their long dash down towards the Plain.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### “THE SWATHE OF THE STORM”

A T Afuleh Abu George was able to see that it was Beit Alpha that was being attacked, and, knowing that this was outside his division, he rang up District Headquarters and asked permission to proceed to relieve the place. An officer answered the telephone, a man for whom Abu George had not the faintest friendship. Rapidly the situation was outlined, but Haifa answered that he was not to go, he would be better employed in minding his own business and attending to the state of his own division.

“But don’t you realize that this is a matter of great urgency? If I do not go to their relief they will be wiped out. There is no one else near enough to give them a hand.”

“I do not wish to repeat myself,” came back the voice from Haifa. “You are refused permission to leave your own division.”

“Have some sense, man,” roared Abu George; “there are several scores of lives, men, women and children, dependent on my immediate action.”

“Will you please comply with my orders?”

“Orders be d——d,” shouted the exasperated man, as the sound of distant musketry grew to a fresh intensity. “Who the blazes are you to give me orders? Get me

on to the District Superintendent of Police at once, so that I can talk to someone sensible."

"The Major is out on patrol, and I am in charge for the time being," replied the voice. "You will not leave your division."

Abu George swore and fumed, and cursed himself for being so punctilious in complying with regulations. He had only done so because failure to observe every jot and tittle of the regulations had been used against him so often by Headquarters. He waited a moment and then rang up again, and, by great good fortune, was connected at once with the D.S.P., who appeared to have just returned to District Headquarters. He required no urging to give the permission. He ordered Abu George to proceed at once and, at all costs, to repulse the attack on the colony and bring the settlers to safety.

His party consisted of Musa and nine constables, eight of whom were Arabs, the other a Samaritan, and, with this slender striking-force, he started at once for Beit Alpha. Kleminoff, with his two mounted companies of colonist volunteers, a few of whom he had now armed with some spare rifles and captured weapons from Nazareth barracks, he ordered to follow as soon as possible. They would be about an hour and a half behind his small force, who were conveyed in commandeered cars.

Some little distance east of Jezreel he had his first view of Beit Alpha. The colony was a large one, so large that the colonists had decided to make a stand there, and not to take part in the general concentration on Afuleh, but he could see through his field-glasses that it was in a most perilous position. The place was almost completely surrounded by large bodies of Arabs, who were slowly

advancing towards the very rudimentary defences that the colonists had thrown up on the outskirts of the settlement.

Abu George was horrified to see how weak and badly placed these slender earthworks were. A single determined rush by the attackers would carry them into the middle of the colony, and, once amongst the wooden houses, nothing would ever get them out again before they had massacred the inhabitants and set the place afire. The defence was most sporadic ; there were too many settlers at one point, and too pitifully few at others. It was obvious that, whilst there was no lack of courage amongst them, there was a pitiful want of organization. Beit Alpha was, as I have said, outside his division, and the native officer of police at Beisan had evidently not considered it necessary to instruct the men in their own defence. Firing into the colony was particularly intense from the mountain on the south side. Less than four hundred yards from the outer houses of the colony were groups of women, leading camels and donkeys with which to bear away the loot they expected to get.

Abu George paused a moment to consider what he should do. It was quite impossible to attack the Arabs from his present position. His men were too few to be spread over so large an area. He knew them well enough to realize that, if they were scattered, they would soon lose the courage that they possessed whilst fighting together and under his immediate eye. The only thing to do was to dash boldly into the settlement, risking the fire of the attackers. To this end he placed his car in front of the little convoy of five machines—the middle one was a spare in case of breakdowns—and told the others

## TO THE RESCUE!

to follow him as fast as they could, taking care that none of them were cut off.

It was a nightmare dash across the open plain, banging and bumping over the uneven ground. It was not long before the Arabs saw them coming, and, as the distance rapidly closed, there was a hailstorm of bullets whistling around their ears. On, straight on, in a blinding cloud of dust, Abu George, taking one hand from the wildly bucking steering-wheel of the Morris he was driving, emptied his pistol into a knot of Bedouin who tried to bar his way, and then, with a final roar of engines, they were inside the colony, with not a man of the police party hurt.

In the colony he was delighted to find three mounted constables who had been aiding the colonists in their defence and he rapidly added them to his own party. He found that there were about forty-five colonists who possessed shot-guns, but that there were less than a score of cartridges left for each man. The position was really desperate, and something had to be done at once. He knew that he would be given no second chance. Unless the Arabs were at once defeated and driven away in disorder, he, and his men, would be doomed to massacre with the colonists.

He split his available force into three sections ; one, under Musa, consisted of three constables and ten colonists ; their duty was to advance "at the double" across the open space to the west and attack the Arab line where it was thinnest, where the women were standing. This would force the Arabs to bunch at this place in order to protect their wives, and would draw away the attackers from their strongest point. The second, under a Jewish trooper, one of the three whom he had found in the colony, and consisting of another ten colonists, were

to remain in the largest building, to which all women and children had been evacuated, and act as guard in case the plan miscarried. The remaining eight troopers and twenty-five colonists were to carry out the most difficult part of the scheme. They were to wait until Musa's party were heavily engaged and it became obvious that the Arabs were rushing to the defence of their womenfolk, when Abu George, with the main body, would sally out of the north side of the colony, storm the hill, and dislodge the attackers from their strongest position.

The plan, thanks to Musa's leadership and the bravery of the colonists, worked beautifully. The Arabs opened a heavy fire on Musa's party as they came across the open, but failed to inflict any casualties. The ten colonists held their fire as they advanced, though, as they dropped every fifty yards, Musa's troopers maintained a heavy fire towards the attackers' lines. Abu George was delighted to see how the old man moved his party, absolutely in conformity with the drill book. He had his men in two sections, he and one trooper with one, the other two policemen with the other. Whilst one section advanced the other kept up a covering fire, and, when that section dropped flat, it opened fire with its two rifles until its brother had "leapfrogged" it.

The Arabs rushed from all directions towards the threatened point. There was a tremendous scene of confusion as the women jostled each other and struggled wildly with their camels, many of which had been struck by the high velocity rifle bullets, to turn them and make good their escape. Abu George bided his time, and then, when he saw that the position on the mountain was practically empty, he charged out at the head of his party,

## DEFENCE OF BEIT ALPHA

raced across the intervening space, and seized the abandoned position, shooting four Arabs that he found there as he did so.

Then he shrilled on his whistle as a signal to Musa that all was well and that he should withdraw at once to the colony. The rifles of the eight troopers broke into a sustained rattle as they opened on the Arabs who were rushing towards the threatened camels and women, and, under cover of the fire, Musa withdrew his men safely into the colony buildings. In a few minutes the Arab tracker and his three troopers joined Abu George on the commanding situation he had seized, and added to the volume of fire against the Arabs' positions.

They appeared to be entirely nonplussed by the strength of the defenders and were obviously undecided what to do. The women on their camels were streaming away eastwards in the direction of the Jordan fords, screaming and shouting to the men to come and join them. Yet, for a minute, it appeared as if they would rally and renew their attack, and in that case nothing could have stopped them. Fortunately half a dozen bullets struck home at that instant, and, with the rapidly dropping figures, their courage again seemed to desert them, but still they hesitated, when the sound of heavy musketry in the distance suddenly roared in the air and added the finishing touch. In a few moments the whole horde of Arabs were streaming away in wildest disorder in the wake of their womenfolk towards the river as, over one of the rolling hills to the westwards, suddenly appeared a large number of horsemen, extended in line and riding for the colony.

When Kleminoff and his hundred colonists rode into Beit Alpha, Abu George took the Russian corporal

severely to task, asking what he meant by such a tremendous waste of the ammunition of which they were so short. “What earthly use was there in discharging shot-guns two miles away?”

Kleminoff stood rigidly to attention. “It was the place, sir,” he replied, “that suggested the idea to me. When I was studying military history in the days before the world went mad, I was always impressed by the Emperor Napoleon.”

“What the deuce has Napoleon to do with this confounded Rising?” demanded Abu George angrily.

“This, sir. You have, doubtlessly, read the account of his battle with a very much superior Turkish army on this Plain. It is called the Battle of Mount Tabor. You will remember that the French army on the plain were in a bad way, formed into squares against the Turks, and almost at their last gasp. Napoleon was marching over the mountains above us, and knew that he could not arrive in time to join them before his army was annihilated. He unlimbered his guns and commenced a terrific cannonade, although he was far out of range, and the sound of his guns so frightened the Turks that they fled in disorder.”

“Good man, Kleminoff, your effort to-day had the same effect,” admitted Abu George. “Now we must get to work and put Beit Alpha into a state of defence.”

Within a few hours the colony had thrown up adequate defences. A party of the Frontier Force under a British officer assumed responsibility for the safety of the colony assisted by the colonists themselves, and a small strong-point was constructed on the commanding mountain to the south, leaving it in as strong a posture of defence as possible. Abu George and his men left before nightfall

and returned to Nazareth, where their presence was urgently needed, whilst Kleminoff and his "cavalry-men" returned to Afuleh.

The Nazareth mob was more out of hand than ever, for news had come through of the terrible massacre of the Jews at Hebron, which they were celebrating as a glorious victory, and they had also been told that a great army of mounted and well-armed Bedouin had crossed the Jordan near Jericho, and were about to march on Jerusalem. Both items of news were correct, but the Nazareth mob did not know that the Government, shocked at last, had restored order in Hebron, and had also persuaded the Bedouin to retire to Transjordan, convincing them that the agitators who brought them into Palestine by raising the cry that the Jews had seized the Holy Places, had lied.

The mob, firmly convinced that the hour of British surrender had struck, stormed the Nazareth *serai*, and, overawing the officer whom Abu George had left in charge by their threats, had released the prisoners in the jail, and were now awaiting the return of their doughty divisional officer in the open space in front of the Church of the Annunciation. They had armed themselves with cobblestones, staves, daggers and a few firearms, for these city men did not possess the rifles of the rural villagers. In a towering rage, Abu George roared into the village, with five constables at his back, led by his inseparable Musa. A silence fell on the townsmen as he drove up to them, jumped out of the car, and menacingly demanded the reason for the gathering. No one answered; he turned round to take something from the seat of the car; one townsman tentatively raised his shot-gun, but, meeting the unwinking eye of old Musa, whose rifle barrel

was uncompromisingly trained on him, thought better of it. Then, suddenly, Abu George was in violent action. He had turned to reach for his whip, and, cursing, roaring and threshing, he was into them. Madly they pressed back to avoid him, whilst the long lash rose and fell unmercifully.

“ And is it thus, puppy dogs, that you greet me ? ” he shouted. “ Back to your kennels, every sickly one of you. Back ! I say, back ! ” and his arm rose and fell as he flailed them. Dozens stumbled and fell in the mad rush to escape his lash. Finally the rear ranks melted away, and up the steep hill, along the broad road to the Well of the Blessed Virgin, and across the valley towards the Church of Our Lady’s Spasm, streamed the very subdued and hand-dog mob, intent only on escaping this one man they feared.

Abu George was streaming with perspiration and gasping for breath by the time he had finished with them and the last rioter had fled. He stumped into the abandoned bar beside him, reached for a bottle of John Haig and poured himself a liberal peg. Then, turning to his haggard troopers, as badly needing rest and food as he was himself, and now doubled up with laughter at the rout of the loud-mouthed Nazarine warriors, he said :

“ Come, my sons, there is still work for us to do. Give me the list of prisoners. Good. Now we will go around to their houses and re-arrest them.”

For the next three hours he, and his weary men, went their round of Nazareth’s back streets, and arrested almost all those who had been released by the mob. Where a man was missing he took his nearest male relative, and, with a miserable tail of hang-dog Nazarines behind him, he re-entered the *serai* and roared for the

native officer responsible. What Abu George had to say to him is neither here nor there, it is certainly quite unprintable ; but it finished by the officer finding himself under the closest of close arrests. But there was to be no sleep for any of the police that night. There were rumours of the Zbeid Bedouin having crossed the Jordan, and down they had to rush to the fords, arriving in time to turn back, by peaceful persuasion (backed by the lucky arrival of a patrolling aeroplane, which flew low to see what was happening around the fires) to convince them that the back of the Rising was broken and that there would only be several fatalities, and little chance of loot, did they persist.

At dawn he was patrolling, and was just in time to engage a party of Arabs who were returning from an attack on Mishamr Ha'Emek colony to the westwards. He inflicted a few casualties, but the Arabs bore away their dead and wounded, and he never discovered the extent of their losses. Meanwhile things began to improve rapidly in his Division. Several of the smaller colonies, and most of the isolated farms belonging to the Jews, had been gutted and burnt, but the Arabs had found nothing of value, for everything that could be carried away had been taken to safety in Afuleh. Klem-inoff and his mounted colonists had seen to that, during the days that had passed since the first attack, and the Arabs appeared to be growing tired of taking the risk of bumping into Abu George, and his seemingly ubiquitous patrols.

But the effect on the man himself was terrible. His face was haggard, it had lost its usual look of robust good health and supreme *bonhomie*. His eyes were sunken, his temper worn to a dangerous rag, whilst his brain was

weary with lack of sleep and the tremendous responsibility imposed upon it. Much of the anxiety about his northern villages was removed when Musa handed him a note, written in flowing Arabic script.

“ TO ABU GEORGE BEY,

“ Fear not, Abu George, that aught will happen in the villages of the *fellahin* north and east of Nazareth. O man that aided me and whom I have aided, and would aid far more did you but allow me, I have arranged things with the men of my tribe (without their suspecting that it was I who did it, poor blind fools, they think that they have thought upon it themselves) so that all your villages, which are so troublesome, will remain quiet with their men at home, and not fighting against you and those Jewish dogs whom you must aid for your livelihood. The *fellahin* know that, if they leave their villages, they will leave them open to a raid of my people, and they have been given to understand that we are waiting for them to go, so that we may plunder them. Fear not, man with the boy's eyes, no such raid is intended. I will hold the peace for you.”

Lateefa had not signed her note. She knew well that Abu George would know from whence it came. He thanked his stars for the good offices of the Bedouin maid, but he was far too tired to be able really to appreciate it at the time.

That night came welcome news. The Navy had landed at Haifa, and, after fighting a strenuous action in the streets, had restored order. At about eight o'clock three omnibuses rolled into Afuleh, filled with the white-clothed, steel-helmeted sailors, complete with machine-guns, and he was able to draw his first breath of relief.

Colonies blazed again in the dark with the fires lit by raiders, but the Arabs were taught such a lesson that night by the men of the battleship *Barham* that they decided to let things be. In the morning, hurrying from the south, came the first British soldiers, men of the Green Howards, who had been flown up from Egypt to Jerusalem. By noon the South Staffords, brought by warship from Malta, took over strategic posts, and, for all intents and purposes, the Rising was over. But, that afternoon, came news of a further massacre in Safed, an event all the more unexpected when the Arabs must have known that their country was rapidly filling with troops. Abu George, tired as he was, went with the soldiers in the wild rush to reach the north Galilean town, the place which was once pointed out as "that city set upon a hill which cannot be hid."

There the scenes baffled description. The number of dead was less than it had been in Hebron, but the horror of the way in which the victims had been done to death were more reminiscent of the days of Ghengis Khan than those of modern times. Abu George, hardened old soldier as he was, retched and vomited at the terrible slaughter that he saw. These things and worse might have happened in his own colonies; would have happened, but for his indomitable energy and spirit. Women's bodies, foully murdered, cluttered the streets and houses, and neither age nor illness seemed to have won any mercy from the killers.

But with the coming of the troops, his duties really commenced. The back of the Rising was not yet broken, there were plenty of gangs still about only too anxious to kill and pillage, whilst the scores of outlaws who had found Palestine too hot to hold them, poured back across

the frontiers, and took control of the bands of fugitives who were hiding in the mountains to escape arrest and the gallows. Worst of all these was a certain Druze, Fuad el Libnani, the most cold-blooded criminal that the Holy Land had known for a century. There were others nearly as bad, whilst the tribes east of Jordan thought that the good old days, when they had reaped a fine living by raiding the fatter villages west of the river, had returned in all their glory.

The military, as is usual in such cases, carried on in active service conditions for some time after the real pressing danger was over. Abu George's presence, his knowledge of the country, its people and the language were absolutely indispensable to the colonel commanding at Afuleh, which had now become Military Headquarters for the north. With most of the soul-searing strain relaxed, and the responsibility taken from his shoulders, the reaction hit Abu George savagely. Half crazy for want of sleep he found that he could not close his eyes. If, for a moment, he managed to doze, he found himself on his feet at the side of the bed, getting ready to rush off to some threatened point. The sights of Safed preyed on his mind, as had never the ghastlier ones of Flanders. He was getting older, that was the trouble.

Freedom from stirring action was not good for him, it was perhaps the weakest point in his character. His very nature craved movement, responsibility, opposition, without them he was useless and liable to deteriorate quickly.

The country was still too unsettled to bring his wife and family back to Nazareth, so he remained in Mess.

It happened about this time that I was invited to dinner aboard the battleship *Barham* at Haifa, by one of her officers, a fellow ex-*Conway*, and, after coming ashore

on the last boat, I was driving my two-seater car back to my penal settlement on the Plain of Armageddon. On the way there I had to drive for some miles along the Haifa-Nazareth road, and to pass through the Jewish colony of Yazur. I had dined extremely well, and was feeling very cheerful, but had the sense to see, as I passed through the colony, that I was very short of petrol. The time was after midnight, and there was only one shop open. I stopped my car, got out, with the white expanse of my shirt-front shining in the light that struck upon my blue and silver mess-dress, and walked in. The place was a little general store with a liquor licence. As I came through the door, the Jewish proprietor hailed me in broken Arabio.

"*Mahaba*, Abu George Effendi, welcome. I am very glad and honoured to see the saviour of my people. Come, have a bottle of beer with me."

I realized that he had mistaken me for Abu George, we were very much alike in size and general appearance, and full of *Barham's* hospitality, decided not to undeceive the man. I thanked him, and duly had the bottle. He pressed me to another. We had it. Over the third that he offered me, he waxed voluble :

"Do you not think it terrible, Abu George, that the Government have not punished that officer in Hebron ? He ought to be imprisoned for allowing all those people of my race to be killed, shouldn't he ?"

I agreed, although the man in question, refused aid by Jerusalem, and left to face a fanatical, maddened mob entirely on his own, with his police broken and dispersed, had fought most gallantly until he was wounded in the foot.

"And what do you, think, *Effendi*, of the other officer

in Safed ? Do you not think it a shame that, when all the troops were in the country, such a terrible massacre should have occurred ? Is it not true that he made the Arabs a silly speech instead of breaking them ? I wish I had the power to punish him as he deserves.”

I agreed with him and told him that I wished he had. Poor old —— had certainly done his best in handling things at Safed, and he had been assisted by a really good second-in-command, without both of whom a bad affair would have been a thousand times worse, but I had no objection to the Jewish shopkeeper criticizing him.

Then the man bent across to me and said :

“ But do you know the cause of all the trouble, the reason why all this blood had been shed ? It is because one man was allowed to flout us Jews with impunity, and for that reason the Arabs grew bold and were not afraid to strike at us. That swinehound Duff, out there at his penal camp at Jelamet el Mansura on the Plain, is the cause of all this trouble. God of my fathers, what would I not give to have him sitting here at my mercy ! ”

I looked at him. “ What would you do ? ” I asked.

“ I would drive this long knife I keep here for cutting cheese into his rotten heart. I would avenge all the innocent blood that lies at his door,” he hissed, grasping the knife from behind the counter, and whirling it about. “ If he had not pulled down that screen at the Wailing Wall on Yom Kippur, this Rising would never have happened. I hope the Government will realize his sin and burn him at the stake.”

“ I hope that they will crucify him,” I replied and started for the door.

“ No, no, Abu George,” he begged solicitously, “ do not let us talk about these terrible people. Pshaw !

These officers, what are they ? ” and he made a gesture of infinite disgust. “ It is people like you who are true friends to Juda. Have another bottle of beer ? ”

I did. I helped him finish the case, and accepted the free fill of petrol that the bloodthirsty storekeeper, by this time definitely hilarious, insisted upon my having.

Abu George, whom I saw in Afuleh the next day, expressed himself as decidedly annoyed when I told him of the incident, and accused me of having obtained his petrol and beer by false pretences, by which I knew he was fast approaching his proper bed-time.

But the climax to the incident came some weeks later when Abu George had gone on a joy-ride to Beirut, accompanied by a captain of a British regiment. They had had a fairly good time in the city, and when they started to drive back to Palestine Abu George took the wrong road and started in the direction of Damascus over Mount Lebanon. It was nearly three hours before they got their proper route and made a fresh start, from Beirut. They passed through the frontier posts, Acre, and along the sea-shore and, being pressed for time, did not stop at Haifa.

By the time that they reached Yazur, *en route* for Nazareth, not only did Abu George need petrol, but his tongue called aloud for a bottle of beer. They stopped outside the same café that had supplied me so generously on the occasion I have described. Oil and a four-gallon tin of “ Shell ” was poured into the car, and two bottles of Barclay’s lager were produced. The proprietor stood patiently by, and, when they had finished, asked Abu George for ten piastres more than the standard price of “ Shell ” petrol, five more than that of lubricating oil, and twenty more than that of the beer. Abu George promptly

exploded, stood up in the driving seat of his car, and, drumming on his chest in the style of Tarzan of the Apes, boomed :

“ Take a good look at me, I am Abu George, not that stout ruffian to whom you gave so much in my name the other night. Then you could give everything to Abu George, now you want to cheat me.”

The café owner looked anxiously at him. “ Then, *Effendi*, who was that other officer who so much resembles you ? ”

The British infantry officer told me afterwards, when describing the scene, that the poor fellow turned pale green.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### ‘‘AFTERMATH’’

WITH the suppression of the Rising things changed very greatly in the administration of the police divisions of Palestine. Nowhere was this more noticeable than in Nazareth. The collapse of all their hopes, and the presence of British soldiers in the Russian pilgrim buildings close to the Well of the Virgin, took the spirit out of the people. No longer would they listen to the vapourings and furious bombast of the low *effendieh* agitators. Too many Arabs had fallen before the guns of the troops, the gallant resistance of the Jews had taken them only too obviously by surprise, and they clearly saw that, without powerful aid from one of the Arab princes in other lands, any further attempt at rebellion on a grand scale would be impossible for years to come. They were content to bide their time, until a prolonged period of peace once again led the Government into the error of cutting down the public security forces, and evacuating the Imperial troops.

All this was definitely bad for Abu George. It was no longer necessary for him to fight singlehanded against almost impossible odds, the need to outwit and overcome powerful opposition had, for the time, entirely vanished. Murderous intrigue died down, the villagers were afraid to raise their heads against the now all-powerful

police, backed by the bayonets of the British battalions. The result, in so far as he was concerned, was only too easy for those of us who knew him, to foresee. He drank too much, paid less and less attention to his work, and, worst of all, the domestic differences which had had their root during the period of service in Haifa, rose their ugly heads again. His wife was not the type of woman to submit tamely to dictation, she was as proud and stout-hearted in her Northern Italian way, as he was himself.

Abu George found himself forced to engage in such paltry work as controlling traffic, and the detection of petty thefts, work that had been safely left to his oldest and most tired men. The shadow of the man's spirit was only too apparent even in this, perhaps he grasped eagerly at something that would still give him authority and the urge to combat. Drivers of hackney cars, lorry-drivers, and chauffeurs of motor omnibuses did their utmost to avoid passing through Nazareth, where traffic control was at its strictest.

I was once going through Nazareth, and stopped to fill with petrol at the garage in the centre of the town, at the junction of the main road with the street running up to the Church of the Annunciation, and passed a remark on the small number of taxi drivers standing around. The garage proprietor winked his one eye at me, the other had been lost during a village fight years before, when the man had been a police trooper.

“They are all in the church, *Effendi*,” he said, “at least all those who are not in the Jama’a (Mosque).”

“Why, it is Tuesday,” I replied. “Is it some special feastday?”

“No, Duff *Effendi*,” he grinned. “They go to pray every morning at this time.”

"Have they suddenly gone religious, then?"

"Truly they have, *Effendi*. They go to pray Allah, and those who are Christians to Sittna Mariam, that the wife of Abu George will treat him well, and not make him angry over his breakfast. If she does, then they are sure that he will be down here on the car-park before he goes to the *serai*, and that will mean many fines for the drivers in front of the magistrates."

I met him on several occasions during these months, generally at the mess of the military officers, which was in the Casa Nova, the pilgrim hospice maintained by the Franciscan monks, and I was greatly surprised at the change in him. Little affairs took up so much of his time, he seemed to be so eagerly engrossed with matters that he would hardly have deigned to notice before the Rising. Not that his division was out of control; it would have been better for him if it had. On the contrary it was in apple-pie order, and there was hardly a whisper of anything wrong anywhere. Most significant of all he had been abusive to Musa, and the old Bedouin had left him, and, knowing what the connection between these two men had been, we felt more than uneasy. But there were traces of the man that had been, still left. One night in the mess I heard him expound what is probably the only answer to the riddle of this Too-much-Promised Land. There were four of us in the room besides himself; the Doctor, a major of the R.A.M.C.; the Company Commander, a captain of the British regiment quartered in the town, the Subaltern, a lieutenant with an insatiable craving for winding a hunting-horn around the passages of the Casa Nova at all hours of the night to the intense and vociferous disgust of the worthy monk in charge, as well as a penchant for dislocating his shoulder and

crowning statues with Moslem turbushes ; and, finally, myself.

At the risk of being boring, the solution propounded by Abu George so exactly suits the situation that I am going to give it. The Doctor had asked what would be the eventual fate of the Jewish National Home, and Abu George answered :

“ It is hard to say, Doctor, it all depends on our future policy in this country. If we carry on as we have been doing, then it can only have one end, bloody extinction. But if we have only the courage to start afresh, then there is no reason why Israel should not become even more firmly established than it was even in the days of David and Solomon.”

“ What do you mean, exactly ? ” asked the Doctor.

“ Well, it will be a long and dry business telling you, so pass the bottle across. I am afraid that I shall be riding my pet horse to death if I start,” he apologized ; “ but if you want to know my opinion, I’ll give it to you.”

“ Go ahead, old man,” replied the Company Commander, catching the eyes of all of us.

Abu George settled himself comfortably in front of the flaring Valor stove, stretched back in the long chair, and commenced :

“ Well, you fellows have asked for it, so don’t blame me, and don’t curse me if I have to dive back into ancient history a little. You will agree with me that this is by no means the first time that an attempt has been made to erect a system of civilization in this country. Everyone seems to have tried it. The Hebrews did it, so did the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Eastern Empire after them, the Arabs, the Crusaders, and even

the Turk. Most of them have crashed in ruins, burying the settlers beneath their rubble, and, you will note, nearly always from the same causes, internal discord, foreign conquest and the irruption of the raiding tribes from the eastern deserts. In the past one-hundred-and-thirty years there have been no fewer than five separate invasions, on a greater or lesser scale, by foreign powers : Napoleon, Sidney Smith, Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, Stopford and his allied fleet of British, Austrian and Russian men-of-war in 1841, and, finally, Allenby.

“The same situation stands to-day. You have this Wahabite reform in the eastern desert. Ibn Saoud and his followers have overthrown the Meccan kingdom, which we set up. They hate the lax Moslems of Palestine as much as they do the Christians and Jews, and, if they are given the chance, they will overrun this country as efficiently as their ancestors did in the days of the Caliph Omar, or under the great Sultan Salah-ed-din. There are scores of thousands of fighting men following the banners of the Reform, horsemen with nothing to lose, and everything to gain, by raiding Palestine, and with the driving, urgent motive that, by so doing, they will be re-establishing Islam where the fire has grown cold. Besides them there are the other tribes of Bedouin east of the Jordan, who have always considered loot from Palestine as part of their usual perquisites.

“And, gentlemen, you will agree that the third historical element is still active. There is plenty of internal discord to be found. We have seen enough of it in the last few months.

“You will also agree that the only thing that keeps all these three dangers from the throat of the National Home is the bayonet of Britain. The danger of foreign invasion

may be remote, although you will never convince me that Turkey has ever been happy about the lopping-off of the branches of her Empire. Her history seems to be following only too closely that of the Byzantium she overthrew. But the other dangers are pressing enough, and they will only be held at bay so long as we are strong enough to keep our bayonets' shadow looming over the country."

"Well, that's all right," broke in the Subaltern. "There is no question of Britain going down the drain, is there ?"

"I know, James," answered Abu George, "but neither we, nor the Jews, are dealing with to-morrow or the next day, not even with the next decade. We are trying to discuss the future of their great experiment, and that may be a matter of a century and more. I am sure," he resumed, returning to the thread of his argument, "that you all agree with me that it is only our military strength that makes it possible for the Jews to build their National Home, don't you ?"

We agreed with him. The events of that year proved that he was right.

"My second point is that the Palestinians bear us no good will, and certainly, have neither gratitude nor loyalty in their hearts towards us. There is very little reason why they should have. They are clever, cunning people and they see only too clearly that what we have done in the country is really to our own advantage, no matter how hard we pretend that we are working for their good. The roads we have made, the improvements in the cities and towns are all for our own convenience, made mainly for strategic reasons. We make a great parade of our Health and Social services, but what do they actually

amount to ? Less than nothing if you count it up. Tuberculosis is rampant amongst the *fellahin* and Bedouin. You will find T.B. bones and bodies everywhere, won't you, doctor ? Even lepers are not segregated. I can show you half-a-dozen any day in the *suq*. Admittedly there is a noble work being done in this direction by the Moravians in Jerusalem, but they were there long before we came, and the people know that it is not a Government concern.

"Again, take lunatics. A dozen times a month I have cases that urgently need attention and confinement in an asylum, and I cannot get them into the Government lunatic asylum at Bethlehem, there is no room for them. I have to wait until they do something criminal and then the poor devils are sent to the Central Prison, where they wear convict uniforms and have to be treated as desperate criminals. I know, for I had plenty of them in Acre Prison when I was there. You have seen the lunacy ward, and, as you know, there are all sorts of other cases confined in the same place in full view of each other. To make matters worse they are next door to the execution shed, and on the occasions when there is a man to be hanged, they are in full view of all the bustle that attends such scenes.

"I am afraid that I feel very bitterly on this subject. Let me turn to hospitals. You will think that I am getting far from my subject of the National Home ; I am not, but I do want you to see, as the Palestinian does, why he should bear us no loyalty. Here in Nazareth there are four or five hospitals ; in Nablus, two more ; in Jerusalem perhaps a couple of dozen, large and small, in Bethlehem some, whilst in Jaffa and Haifa there are more. Certainly there are excellent Government

hospitals, but they are more concerned with Government officials than they are with civilians ; the remainder are mainly Mission hospitals or those belonging to some particular nationality. I know that Palestine is only a small country, and that there should be enough hospitals to deal with the population. There are, but they are situated all wrongly.

“ From here to Nablus is seventy-odd kilometres, but in all that district, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, is there a single hospital to which the *fellahin* or Bedouin can go ? There is not, bar the Jewish institution in Afuleh ; but, willing and anxious as they are to help the Arab, they generally have a long waiting list of their own colonists, whom they were built to serve.

“ I expect you have seen, as I have so many times, people being brought into Nazareth to hospital, people dying on their feet, in fact often dying from the hardships of their journey. Riding on camel-back is not the ideal way to bring the desperately ill in to where they can obtain attention, yet that is what has to be done in this country. Please do not think that I am blaming the great Mission hospitals, it is only too easily understandable why they chose some place connected with the Scripture in which to build their institutions, and, anyway, it is entirely their own affair. Imagine what would happen though, if some of those redundant, and almost empty, hospitals in Jerusalem were scattered to serve twenty-mile radii all over the country, instead of being bunched in one place.

“ Doctors, too. What have we done for the peasants and the Bedouin ? Again, little, very little. Those who come in to the doctors’ clinics receive treatment, it is true ; but most of them cannot be bothered to make the

difficult journey into the nearest town in the early stages of their sickness when there is some hope of saving them, and so they die by scores. Has anything been done to improve water supplies in the villages? Or drainage? Or to make life more clean and hygienic? Nothing, or at best practically nothing. Why, even the campaign against the great malaria wave is mainly done by private charity. If it were not for the Rockefeller Foundation, and some of the Jewish expeditions, we should have the population decimated every year.

“Then my own particular province, public security. Is the peasant any more safe for our being here? Of course he isn't. He certainly has a small amount of security from the old time raid-in-force. That does not happen nowadays, it is true, but smaller raids by armed gangs, and parties of bandits, inflict more damage on him than did a Bedouin foray. There were over three hundred and sixty reported murders in Palestine in the twelve months before the Rising, and about eight people were hanged in all. The country is not much bigger than Yorkshire; can you imagine such a state of affairs there? And there were, doubtlessly, hundreds of cases of murders that were never reported, whilst highway robberies and cattle-thefts were higher even than they had been in the laxest years of the Ottoman régime.

“And, finally, taxes. They are higher and more crushing than they have ever been within the memory of the peasants and village people, and they get little in return for the extortionate sums they pay. We make a show of doing things in the cities, we love to hear the tourists say how marvellous we are as they look at the great Government buildings, the schools, the hospitals and the Training Colleges; but if those people could only see the

villages where the bulk of the population lives, they would have something far different to say.”

All this, of course, was an old story to me, I knew it only too well, but to the three soldiers it seemed to be a revelation. They looked at each other, but said nothing.

“ I know,” said Abu George, “ I appear to be wandering from my point, but I do want you three fellows to have some appreciation of what actually is happening here. It is all very fine to condemn the Arab without really knowing what his position is ; but, if I am really to give you an opinion of what the chances of survival for the National Home are, we must consider all the factors. Now we come to the most important one, the natural intolerance of the fanatical Moslems for adherents of another creed. Our people are really very backward, and little has been done to dispel their ignorance since our occupation, despite all the surface glitter of education in the towns. Certainly a beginning has been made in the villages by one of the few really constructive Government Departments we have. The village schools have multiplied and increased tremendously, but even yet most of the education dispensed is of the traditional variety, too much religion and not enough of the things of this workaday world. The *fellahin* know their Koran better than they do their geography.

“ It is to this ignorance and fanaticism that the townsmen appeal, and, by rousing it, they are able to start shows like this last one that we have just finished. But your peasant, like every other farmer in the world, is a shrewd, hardheaded sort of fellow, and the *fellahin* are beginning to see that they have been used as catspaws by the *effendieh*. They are asking themselves if any of the latter class are now in jail, or if any of them have been

condemned to death since the end of the Rising, even if any of them were killed in action during the fighting. The answer is, as you know, none.

"But all this won't make them love the Jew any more, especially when they see that all their present miseries are brought upon them by a Frankish nation, ourselves, supporting the Jews. Yet, if they see that the Jewish way of farming is better than their own, if they can get agricultural machinery and money to work the land, then will come, first, toleration, and, later, friendship. You already have this in some parts of the country. There were no attacks on the big Jewish colonies on the Plain of Sharon this time, as there were in 1921. All the Arab villages there, led by the big one of Qalqilyeh, are busy imitating the colonists. The Jews have not been slow in holding out the olive-branch and are showing the Arab farmers how to use the new machines and apply the modern methods of cultivation. What has happened there, you will find spreading in the years to come, although this last Rising has put back the clock for twenty years." He paused.

"Then, do you advise letting well alone, and allowing things to evolve gradually?" asked the Doctor.

"Good Lord, no!" said Abu George. "We have had enough of *laissez-faire*. The Palestine Government has done little else ever since it took over, and this last business will show you how much good that has done. Bowing to public outcry was the cause of their disarming the Jewish colonies, and leaving them completely defenceless. What we want is something constructive."

"And that is——?" asked the Company Commander.

"A clean cut with all that we have done before," answered Abu George, "and, above all things, a general

clearing out of the office-limpets in Jerusalem. Do you realize that no Palestinian has a voice in the ways of administration? In my own force, one of the most important in the country, a native cannot rise higher than ‘three pips,’ the lowest grade for most British officers. In most other departments it is the same, whilst the Council is composed of British Heads of Departments. The younger men, who have grown up since the War, the lads who are now anything from twenty to twenty-four, know little of what their fathers suffered under the effete rule of the Sultan of Turkey, and can only see the anomalies of the present state of affairs. They crave for some hand in their own governance.

“If you consider the Palestinian character for a moment you will see that they are quite incapable of governing minorities. There has not been a Palestinian nation in the Holy Land since Titus commenced, and Hadrian completed, the expulsion and dispersion of the Jews. They have no idea of nationality; religious creeds have taken its place, so that now you have many hostile, and mutually distrustful, cliques and communities. But *there is* a way by which this lack could, and should, be met, and a Palestinian nation formed, capable of internal solidarity, and of standing united against the foe across the desert boundaries to the east. In time even they may be able to stand against foreign invasion, but that is more remote and need hardly trouble us at present. What we have to answer is: Have we executed the reasons for our Mandate, or not? I say, no! This Rising has definitely given the answer. We have not given the Jews security to build their National Home and neither are we educating the Palestinian to be able to govern himself.”

"Then how are you going to do it?" asked the Doctor. "Is there any way by which these two things can be done?"

"Yes," said Abu George, "there is a way. But it will take a lot of courage for our Jerusalem people to see it and to embark upon it, for the first thing necessary is to clear away the irritating top-hamper of redundant officials who swarm around the Government offices. I suppose it is the hardest thing of all to be altruistic enough to banish yourself from a safe, easy and comfortable billet, but it will have to be done if Palestine is ever to be given a chance."

"But kicking out all the British officials and replacing them with native sea-lawyers won't do it," protested the Subaltern.

"I do not mean that at all. I do not mean to replace them with local politicians," he replied. "Briefly, my plan is this. Send for a large-scale map of Palestine, will you, old man," he asked the Company Commander. "One on which you don't mind me making pencil markings."

It was brought and spread upon the table, and we all bent interestedly over it and watched Abu George begin to draw lines upon it. He stopped for a moment. "Let me explain first."

"Since it will be quite impossible for Arabs to be allowed to govern Jews and other minorities, and as the Christian world will not tolerate the Holy Places being once again placed out of its control, to mention only two of the difficulties that face us, I had better be more explicit.

"If we take Palestine as one country and give it a Parliament on a democratic and European basis, we shall

be only wasting our time. The Arab majority will oppress the Jewish minority, and, even if the Jews indulged in unrestricted immigration, it would only precipitate an invasion by the desert tribes, whom the disgruntled Moslems would call into their aid, and we should be worse off than we are at present. Therefore something else is clearly necessary.”

“I should hope so,” remarked the Subaltern. “We had a hard enough job in conquering Palestine to give it up to people who will make a mess of it and probably be hostile.”

“That is quite true,” joined in the Company Commander. “As I see it, one of the many good reasons why we are in this country at all, is because we wish to avert any further threats to the Suez Canal, and also to use it as an essential halting place on the airways route to India and the Far East.”

“Agreed,” said Abu George, “and you might add also to serve as a landward end for the oil pipe-line from Iraq. It will cut a good many days off the transport of oil-fuel to Britain. Further, it gives us an ideal naval base at the opposite end of the Mediterranean to Gibraltar. As you know they are already beginning the construction of a great harbour at Haifa. But I have allowed for all that in my plan, not that anyone will ever take any notice of what I suggest, but you fellows may agree with me.

“Briefly, I suggest cutting Palestine up into one Crown Colony and seven cantons, with a Federal District as well.”

“Good heavens, man,” interjected the doctor, “it’s only a place the size of Wales that you are dealing with, not a continent.”

“I know, doctor, but size is not the deciding factor in

## THE PLAN OUTLINED

Palestine. Don't forget that it is the Holy Land of two great faiths, and contains several important shrines of a third. It is the one possible land-bridge between the two continents of Asia and Africa, and, lastly, it is the tap through which will flow all the trade of the vast hinterland to the eastwards.

"Now take your map and watch what I do. Here is my first canton, Moslem No. 1 :

"From Bab-el-Wad Inn on the Jerusalem-Jaffa road, southwards along the base of the mountains to their south-western angle, thence across to Askalon and the sea. Along the foreshore past Gaza to the Sinai frontier, follow that border south eastwards to Akaba, and thence, up the present eastern frontier of Palestine, to the Wadi Auja, north of Jericho ; thence, along the base of the mountains, south to the Roman road up Wadi Kelt, and the main road from Talaat-el-Damm, where the Roman roads make a junction, to Bethany. Leave a break across Jerusalem city, and start again to the west of the outskirts, and follow the Jerusalem-Jaffa road back to Bab-el-Wad. Follow ? "

We nodded our heads.

"Now for No. 2 Arab canton," he continued. "Start again from one mile due north of Bab-el-Wad Inn, and go northwards as far as the Pass along the south-eastern foot of Mount Carmel where it debouches at Ain Haud near Athlit Castle, following the line of the foothills, and including the towns of Qalqilyeh, Tiyebeh and Tulkarm. Turn through the Pass of Carmel until you reach Tel Keimun on the Plain of Armageddon, and then, due east, along the base of the Samaritan hills until you reach the Jordan, following that southwards until you reach the Wadi Auja north of Jericho, and the northern frontier of

Canton No. 1, passing north of the Municipal area of Jerusalem, somewhere about the village of Shaafat.

“ No. 3 Arab Canton is easier. It consists of the present Emirate of Transjordania. Now for the Jewish Cantons.” He paused and looked at us to see if we had grasped his meaning. The first will be between the western frontiers of Arab Canton No. 1 and the Mediterranean, with its northern border one yard from the southern ditch of the main Jerusalem-Jaffa road, but excluding the towns of Ramleh and Jaffa, which are predominantly Arab.

“ Jewish Canton ‘ B ’ will be north of the northern ditch of the main Jerusalem-Jaffa road, including the township of Tel Aviv and comprise the whole area between the western borders of Arab Canton No. 2 and the sea, as far north as Athlit.

“ Jewish Canton ‘ C ’ to be the whole Plain of Armageddon, with the bases of the Samaritan and Galilean hills as its northern and southern boundaries respectively, until you reach on the northern boundary a spot five miles from the Jordan. Thence draw a line five miles westward of the river and the Sea of Galilee northwards until the present international boundary is reached. The River Jordan and the western banks of the Sea of Galilee form the eastern boundaries.

“ That is Jews and Arabs finished with. Now for the Crown Colony, which I will call Phoenicia as a convenient name,” he said. “ Start at Athlit castle and continue your line in a generally northerly direction through the Pass of Mount Carmel to Tel Keimun, through Tel-ul-Kassis, Sheikh Abreikh, Beit Lahm, Mejdal Kerum, Tershiha to the northern frontiers of Palestine, whence you turn westwards to Ras-el-Nakoura.

“ The last canton of all will be for the Druze, Christians

## UNITED CANTONS OF PALESTINE

and Mettwalli, who form the bulk of the population in these parts. It will consist of Nazareth as its principal town and will lie between the boundaries of Phoenicia, Jewish Canton 'C' the present Palestinian-Syrian frontier.

"The Federal District I mentioned will be the joined municipal areas of Bethlehem and Jerusalem with the space between." He turned to us, and putting his pencil back into his breast-pocket said: "Now, have I made myself sufficiently clear?"

"Yes, so far as the division of the country is concerned," replied the Doctor; "but tell us what your ideas are for running this complicated sort of a country."

"I will do my best," answered Abu George, "though I am afraid that I am no constitution framer. I should form the government as some sort of a hybrid between that of Switzerland and the United States of America, with the seat of Government in Jerusalem. For the first few years I would continue the office of British High Commissioner until the plan showed signs of working on its own. Of course the Crown Colony would be entirely removed from all control by the Federal Government. If you like, to get a convenient figure-head you could put in the Emir Abdullah as a strictly limited, constitutional king; but real authority would lie in the Council, which would consist of two members from each canton, with a casting vote in the hands of the Commissioner, although he would possess no power of veto.

"There would also be an elected legislative assembly of, say, five members from each canton, and from this number would be elected, by the Assembly, the members of the Council. How that would work politically I do not know, but, at least, it would give fair representation.

The functions of the Federal Government would be strictly limited to dealing with external affairs, maintaining the integrity of the cantons, acting as a final Court of Appeal and in the administration of the armed forces of the state. Under no circumstances would it be allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of any canton, and, above all, there would be no Federal police force.

“ The cantons would be completely autonomous, except in matters of Customs and foreign relationships. They would have complete domestic sovereignty, and, so far as it did not prejudice the welfare of any other canton, be free to develop its own life and thought in its own way. Any disputes would be submitted to the Federal Courts in Jerusalem, whose decision would be final. Each canton would support its own police force, an armed one, though they would not be allowed to approximate to military. Each would contribute its quota to the Federal Army, and, as Palestine is surrounded by enemies, conscription would be necessary. Garrisons on the frontier, placed there to safeguard the country from raids, would be considered as Federal property. Anyway, I would leave it to those far better equipped than I am to carry on with the administration and constitution of this part of the affair. All I want to stress is that each canton is absolutely free to ‘ hoe its own garden.’ ”

“ Now you will see that my division of the country will impose little hardship on any of the parties. Most of the land in the Jewish cantons already belongs to them. The parts that don’t are not extensively cultivated by the Arabs. I forgot to mention that the Federal District has access to the sea by the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, which is Federal property, as are also the towns of Jaffa and Ramleh, the latter because they are too predominantly

Arab to be left in Jewish cantons where they would only serve as a festering irritant.

"The Arab land, although a great deal of it is hilly, is the place in which most of the *fellahin* live, whilst the Beersheba Bedouins still have their southern desert as part of an Arab canton."

"Yes," broke in the Subaltern, "but Britain does not seem to get much out of it."

"We get all we want in Phoenicia," replied Abu George. "We have our harbour, our end of the pipe-line, our halting-place for aircraft, and our strategic point on the flank of any enemy daring to attack the Suez Canal, and we can act as elder brother to the new State."

"That's true," said the Company Commander, "but what about the French in Syria? Will they agree to us clearing out of our Mandated Area?"

"I believe that they would be glad to, if they could do very much the same thing. If they could set up a French colony along the sea-board, taking in Beirut, Tripoli and Alexandretta, they would be as glad as we ought to be to get rid of the trouble and expense of the remainder of the country."

"There is just one other point," said the Doctor. "I do not quite see how, if we clear out of Palestine, we are going to make the Palestinians work the new state of affairs."

"That is difficult, of course. But, if it was given them on trial for a number of years, as an experiment, I think that they would soon buckle down to it. If they attempted to interfere with each other—for instance, if the Arabs tried terrorism or sabotage in the Jewish cantons—I am certain that a threat to close the country to imports, to stop exports, and to bring the tourist trade of the

turbulent cantons to a temporary halt, would bring them to their knees. If that was not enough, then we could send armoured cars and a few bombing aircraft from Phoenicia to administer the necessary lesson. I do not expect that that would be necessary; the threat to their livelihoods would be enough. The young bloods, who at present cause all the trouble, would be so busy trying the great experiment of forming their new government that I hardly expect there would be much danger.”

“Just one more point,” broke in the Company Commander; “this business of invasion from the eastern desert. Surely your plan does not answer that difficulty.”

“I think it does. At first there would certainly be the need for protection by aircraft from Phoenicia, but you must not forget that we cater for a Palestinian army, under British officers at first, if you like, until they are trained, and that will grow increasingly efficient and more sure of itself. That is what I am trying to get at; difficulties like that will cause this fluid mass of people to coagulate into a nation.”

“Do you think that Jew and Arab will ever fuse?” asked the Doctor. “I don’t; the Jews have never become absorbed in the surrounding population in any country in which they have settled.”

“There will be need for them to intermarry or interbreed,” answered Abu George; “you can have two people working side by side and forming part of a single nation. What about your Maori and Briton in New Zealand? I don’t say that my plan is perfect, but at least it will give some chance for a *modus vivendi* to be found by both Arab and Jew, a thing that they will never do under present circumstances, watched over by foreign officials and guarded by a conqueror’s bayonets. It will

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not take one year or five to work out my idea ; it may take a lifetime or two, but it does give some chance of success to both parties. There is enough land in the Jewish cantons to settle more than a million of their people, a million that are now kept out by economic reasons, entirely based on the mixed political hostilities of to-day.

“ The Arab population will also increase, with greater security and a higher standard of living, so that it should be to the advantage of all concerned. The rising generation will grow up with the idea that Arab and Jew, Christian, Moslem and follower of Israel’s ancient code are all component parts of one people. Oh ! stop me someone ; I am beginning to tub-thump,” and Abu George sat back, apologizing for his long discourse.

I was more than surprised to hear such a speech from him. It showed me a facet of his character that I had never suspected, for I had not realized that he loved and wished to better the country in which he served.

But that night, as usual, he had had a great deal more than was good for him, and I was sad to see the dulling of the sheen on what was such a fine piece of steel sword-blade.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### “ABU GEORGE COMPLETES HIS SERVICE”

THINGS were not by any means quiet in Palestine, and though smothered for the time being by overwhelming force, the rip-tide of racial hatred still swirled beneath the surface. Abu George made a most interesting discovery whilst tackling a gang of raiders who attempted to wipe out the little communal colony of Zrifin. The attackers were armed with ammunition of the very latest issue, so recent that it was fresher than that the Imperial troops were themselves using. The empty cartridge cases that littered the positions the Arabs had used before they were driven away, showed that they had only left the British factories a year previously; that of the British regiments was more than three years old, whilst that of the Palestine Police was mainly ammunition issued in the later days of the War! No more convincing proof of underhand work somewhere can be produced. The Jewish colonists had other, more powerful, enemies to contend with than the fierce Bedouins of Palestine.

He reported the important find at once to Headquarters, but heard nothing more of it.

Eight days after the Arab attack on Zrifin a dead Bedouin, far gone in decomposition, was found amongst

the tall grass, and this nearly led to a further feud against the unfortunate settlers. The damage done to the settlement by the heavy firing of the Arabs was considerable; every one of the pine-planked barrack huts was torn and gashed by the bullets, whilst ricochets had pulled great splinters of wood out of the walls. Fortunately, but most inexplicably, none of the Jews were injured, although the raiders drove off most of their cattle.

Abu George received a decoration. To quote the official citation he was :

" . . . appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for very valuable services in the Nazareth Police Division, and in defence of Beit Alpha Colony, where he displayed great courage and resource."

I am afraid that he grinned when he tacked the purple ribbon on to the variegated show of colour that already graced his burly chest. At the celebration that night in the military mess in the Casa Nova, he said :

" Well, there's one thing about it. I'm all square now with our native officers and most of the mayors and senior native officials. I suppose they gave it to me because there were probably none of those people left on whom to bestow it. I wish I had a share in the company that manufactures purple ribbon ; must be a few square miles of it used in this country each year."

The change that he found in the administration of Nazareth hit him hardest on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration that year. He did his best to warn both the military and civil authorities that there was going to be a great demonstration in the streets against the British Government, but was merely laughed at for his pains. He was told that the Mayor of Nazareth had

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said that he had heard of no plans, and that, if there was going to be any outbreak of disorder, he would be the first to have knowledge of it. Both military and civilians told him bluntly that he was an alarmist, and more than hinted that he would be better attending to his own duties.

However, he took his own precautions, and, when an unruly mob, many of them armed, came pouring out of the bazaars, *en route* to the Government buildings, it was Abu George and his men who smashed the demonstration at the strategic point on their journey. He had quietly ambushed his men in yards and private houses, and when the rioters appeared, he had a bugle sounded, ordered them to disperse. When they resisted, threw stones and bottles, and attempted to force their way through his ranks, he smashed them without mercy, before any help from the other authorities arrived.

I think that his heart was broken by the minor rôle that he was now forced to play, and he took less and less interest in his work, only springing into action, an action which was a godsend to him, when things had passed out of the control of the people who wished to supplant him. He worked out a complete and fool-proof system for the defence of the Jewish colonies, and evolved a code of day and night signalling by which every tiny Jewish settlement could summon instant aid if it was attacked. He got little credit for it—that was snapped up by someone else, although his system is now the one in general usage throughout Palestine.

With the slackening of his personal control and with the losing of their healthy fear of the implacable British officer at Nazareth, the *fellahin* and Bedouin commenced all their old tactics over again. Murder after murder

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occurred, at Reineh, at Lubieh, at Seffuriyeh, at Tel Yussef, everywhere throughout the Division they were reported, murders that culminated in the slaying of Sergeant Singleton at Haifa and the bloody massacre of Jewish holiday-makers at Yazur. This was a particularly bad case, for women and children, as well as men, were trapped whilst returning from a feast, between cactus hedges, only a few miles along the main road from Haifa city. They were callously and indiscriminately shot down by Arabs behind the hedges, who poured a dastardly and sustained fire into them, continuing even after most of their victims were on the ground.

There were continual attacks on settlements. At Tel Yussef colony a Jewish farmer was shot dead; three days later an Arab was killed near the place; at Nahalal there were endless land disputes, always threatening to end in another massacre, yet no one was brought to justice. In the northern hills there was a large and powerful gang of outlaws, numbering well over a hundred, who proclaimed themselves as "Soldiers of the Fatherland" and gave out that they were waging war for Palestine's independence from the Infidel. Not a man, not a woman of the Jewish race was safe in both Galilees, whilst those of British blood were almost equally as insecure. An English woman tourist, taking a quiet walk in the outskirts of Nazareth, was savagely and indecently assaulted. No one seemed able to help. Abu George certainly did his best, but, crippled and hampered as he was, he was powerless to bring an end to a state of affairs that he would have drastically pacified had they happened before the Rising. The state of Public Security in Palestine in the two years immediately following the Rising sheds little credit on those responsible for it. Repression of the

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officer on the spot, for fear that he might offend the susceptibilities of the majority of the population, had its inevitable result. The officers themselves knew there were several instances of men being sacrificed, their careers ruined, for using the methods to which they had always been accustomed in preserving peace and bringing outlaws and highway robbers to book, and they sat back and refused to take any risks of finding themselves suddenly thrown on to the Thames Embankment, with their families, to starve. Small blame to them !

I am afraid that I was in part responsible for the next incident. In 1930 I had played a silly practical joke both on Abu George and the military commander in Nazareth. At that time, April 1st, I was a patient in the Nazareth Hospital, with nothing to do and all day long in which to do it. I had used the telephone to some purpose. I rang up a certain very fervent Nonconformist missionary in Haifa, a man who indulged in long diatribes anent his contempt of prelacy and his intense derision of the episcopal order. I told him that I was the chaplain to His Grace the Archbishop of Charleston, North Carolina, and that His Grace wished to inspect his school. The man had simply grovelled on the telephone, interlarded an "His Grace" into every sentence, had loudly protested his appreciation of the honour, and wished "His Grace" to lunch with him. At noon I rang him up, when he had all his unfortunate orphans and catachumens ready, with their necks scrubbed and in clean pinafores, and told him that "His Grace," having fallen sick of the palsy, and also suffering from having been "bent eighteen years," was sorry to say that he could not attend, and begged to be excused, as he hoped to take up his bed and walk elsewhere. I had also rung

up Abu George and the military commander at the Russian buildings at Nazareth, and had told them to stand by for an inspection by the General Officer Commanding in Egypt. At noon I had also rung them up to say that the general, being also a man set under authority, was very sorry, but, as someone had said "GO," he had gone.

This confession of a footling performance is rendered necessary to explain what happened on the same date in 1931. Abu George was in his office getting on with a huge pile of official files that had accumulated on his desk, when the telephone rang to tell him that General Sir Peter Strickland, Lady Strickland and a number of staff officers would arrive that morning in Haifa. He dismissed it as another "leg-pull," but, to be quite certain, rang up the military. The company commander also thought that it was an April Fool's Day effort, by some would-be humourist, and said that he was ignoring it.

At ten o'clock an agitated German hotel proprietor rang up from the "Galilee" hotel and told Abu George that there were several generals in the building, and that they demanded his instant presence. He guffawed, and told the man not to try pulling *his* leg. Next came an agitated Arab officer, for the Arabs keep the same practical joking festival as do we, and told him that there was not one, but three, generals howling for him at the hotel. He smiled tolerantly and told the officer not to play the fool. When the man protested, Abu George lost his temper, exploded, and the unfortunate Arab retired in haste. Within a few seconds a perspiring British corporal of police charged in and told him that the generals were getting very impatient. By this time he began to suspect that there really was something

wrong, jumped into his car, and rushed to the hotel. There he found an irate General Strickland, an amused Lady Strickland, two awe-struck brigadiers and a marvelling major of artillery.

"You police officers must be busy men to keep me waiting," snapped the General, and refused to listen to Abu George's panted excuses. However, he quietened down, discussed the political situation, and then the whole party walked to the Casa Nova, as they wished to see the room which had been used by General Liman von Sanders when he was commanding the enemy troops during the War, and from which he had escaped in his pyjamas as the victorious Australian Light Horse galloped into the town. All this time Abu George had been doing his best to make his escape, to warn the military officers of the general's presence, but without avail.

From the Casa Nova they walked to the Russian Buildings, the military barracks. Just outside, Lady Strickland detained him to ask some questions about the Well of the Blessed Virgin, and he was an agonized witness of the next incident. The sentry point-blank refused to allow the gentlemen, who were in mufti, inside the barracks.

"I'm not allowed to let — — — tourists in 'ere," he said stolidly. "'Op it, and be blooming quick about it!"

"Do you know who I am?" demanded the General in awful tones.

"No, and I don't blooming well care," answered the sentry. "Orders is orders."

"I'm General Sir Peter Strickland," roared the irate officer.

"And I'm the Shah of Persia," returned the man. "Garn, do you think I don't know what day it is?"

By this time the sergeant of the guard had also joined the group, and he advised them to clear off quickly before they got into trouble. Luckily, at this juncture, a Warrant Officer, coming out of the door, recognized Sir Peter, and hastily ducked back and raced for the Orderly Room, where his company officer and subalterns were sitting.

Frantically he broke the news, only to be met by a sceptical smile from the assembled officers.

"Really, sergeant-major, I thought that you were wise enough not to try and pull that joke on me," said the officer.

But he quickly made them believe it, and the only pity, an enduring one for the human race, is that Bateman was not present to make a permanent record of the meeting of the junior and senior officers over the horror-struck figure of the sentry.

About the same time Abu George had another slip. A Home of Rest had just been completed at Tiberias, the idea being that people who could not afford to make a prolonged stay at the hotels, should remain here whilst they underwent the cure at the local hot sulphur-springs. His Excellency the High Commissioner, at that time Lieut.-Colonel Sir John Chancellor, had agreed to perform the opening ceremony of this admirable institution, and had passed through Nazareth on his way to the town on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He intended returning the next day, and Abu George wished to know the times of his movements, so that he could arrange for the roads to be patrolled.

The telephones at night-time were manned by police personnel, a detestable economy on the part of the Government, which not only threw extra work on an

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understaffed Force but also gave rise to a great deal of resentment, and, consequently, loss of revenue, as the civilian population did not wish to use a service which might be tapped by the police. The police force of Palestine is deeply suspect by the public, who are far from looking on its personnel as such personal friends as do the British in England.

Abu George had more difficulty than usual in getting through to Tiberias, and the temperature rose alarmingly in his office as he met with delay after delay, stupidity on top of inefficiency. Finally he lost his temper entirely, and, when an English voice, after half an hour of frantic "Hulloing" on Abu George's part, was heard at the other end, the officer started to voice his opinion of it.

"——!!!!" he bawled. "What the —— —— do you mean by keeping me waiting like this? Who the —— —— are you?"

"Sir John Chancellor, the High Commissioner," came the quiet-voiced reply.

Collapse of one very much deflated police officer in Nazareth.

But luckily Sir John understood. He was, perhaps, the most understanding of all Palestine's officials, and smilingly accepted Abu George's apologies the next day.

It was precisely this lack of foresight on the part of Headquarters in failing to inform him of the movements of distinguished personages in his area that so annoyed Abu George. One day, entirely without suspecting that anything untoward was happening in his division, he fell into conversation with a small group of visitors, and it was not until he had been speaking to them for some time, and answering their questions about Nazareth, that he discovered that he was addressing the Archbishop of

Canterbury and Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan. You may conceive his annoyance when another party drove up from the opposite direction, commenced talking with the Archbishop and Mr. Morgan, as they all stood in front of the Well of the Blessed Virgin, and proved to be no less personages than the Earl of Athlone and Princess Alice, Palestine's royal visitors. His remarks later down the telephone to Headquarters, were pungent enough to make him more unpopular than he already was.

He had the painful duty of smashing another demonstration in Nazareth, and this time the agitators were able to get at him. They were carrying a new banner, on which he was astonished to see that the Cross and Crescent were emblazoned together. In the scuffle the banner was thrown down and captured by the police, and several rioters were severely handled. The *effendieh* seizing a heaven-sent chance, raised a fearful outcry by *mazbata*, by letter, by telegrams to Jerusalem, and in the vernacular Press, that Abu George had sinned unforgivably, that he had trampled on the Cross to show his hatred and contempt for the sacred emblem. It sounds footling enough; it hardly seems credible that Jerusalem would have taken any notice of such a complaint. But they did, and most effectively, for he was submitted to the most annoying and humiliating inquiries. The Nazareth malcontents were solemnly called up, their statements taken down, and they were given every opportunity to vilify Abu George to their hearts' content. This was the beginning of the end, even Abu George's long-suffering patience began to snap under it, and, when a further incident in which he merely did his plain duty was used against him, it finished him entirely.

A contract to effect repairs to the Nazareth-Jenin

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road across the Plain of Armageddon had been given to a contractor and he, wishing to employ the cheapest labour, engaged Arab workmen. At Afuleh at this time, being the slack season of the agricultural year, there were a great many young Jews who were only too anxious to get a little work. Naturally, when the repairs were going on through their own township, the place for which they paid taxes, they thought that they should be given a chance to share in any work that was going. The contractor refused, and there was an ugly incident.

The contractor then refused to carry on with his task unless he and his men were protected from assault, and the Government promised to give him such protection. Abu George, with another British officer, who was in charge of the British Section of Police, were sent down to carry out this duty. A crowd of young Jews gathered, and though warned in the legal manner to disperse, failed to do so, and assumed a most threatening attitude towards the Arab workmen. Of course, the fat was in the fire. Abu George had to order a baton charge which the colonists stoutly resisted, and the other British officer got a most efficient uppercut to the jaw from a brawny young farmer whom he had attempted to hit. The Jews were finally scattered, but, as is usual in these cases, their organizations in Jerusalem raised such a scream that the Government became most agitated and hunted around for someone to blame. Officially none could be laid at Abu George's door, but, tacitly, he was made to feel that he had blundered very badly and that the powers that were had taken great umbrage at his action. It is always like this in Palestine, the really clever officer is the one who develops a high temperature when such occasions arise and has himself firmly tucked into a hospital bed.

## A MURDEROUS FOOL

One of Abu George's last cases was one of his most brilliant. He was sitting in the military mess at Nazareth, which had now left the Casa Nova and was accommodated in a small house on the south-eastern hill near the Austrian Hospice, yarning with the officers. Suddenly, from close at hand, there was a fusillade of shots, and they all rushed towards the scene of the firing. As Abu George and the military officers scaled some of the dry stone walls a further stream of shots rang out, and the bullets went whizzing over their heads. They could hear a man crashing away down the hillside, but, hearing groans ahead, they went towards the scene of the attack. There they found two young men in their last agonies, who told them that they had been shot by a young man, their relative, Said Selim Warwar. There was a municipal night-watchman also, nearby, who had been severely wounded. Meanwhile police, attracted by the noise of the firing, had rushed to the spot, and they all set out in pursuit of the murderer, after sending the dying youths and the wounded man to hospital.

The fugitive, aided by his relations, got clear away, and all trace of him was lost for the time being, though Abu George had followed his tracks until they were lost several miles from Nazareth, for Musa, you will remember, was no longer with him. Then came word that Said Selim was sheltering with the Gazawieh tribe of Bedouin, east of the River Jordan, and was under the personal protection of their paramount sheikh, the Emir Bishir Hassan.

This was very strange, for the fugitive was a Christian, and most unlikely to be given hospitality for an indefinite period by the proud Moslem chieftain. It was only too obvious that a large sum of money was

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being paid for the privilege. Abu George sent his best native officer, Tewfic Effendi Bishara, to the Emir to ask for the surrender of the man, but the Sheikh refused, and the officer returned alone.

Once again there was a flash of the old Abu George that had been. He mustered every trooper he had, got into communication with the officer commanding the Arab Legion outpost on the other side of the Jordan, then crossed the frontier and rode for the Emir's encampment. This, of course, was entirely outside regulations. Palestine Police were forbidden to cross the border into Transjordan, but it was a practice that was fairly usual when in the hot pursuit of criminals, and had often been done before, without any great objections on either side. But this time it did not work. The Emir prepared to make armed resistance to protect his guest, and neither Abu George nor his opposite number of the Arab Legion were prepared to go to extreme lengths against the Gazawieh tribe. Meantime messengers had been sent by the Paramount Sheikh galloping into Amman, bearing a message to the ruler of Transjordan, and he insisted on the Palestine Police leaving his country immediately. The Arab Legion, however, rode into the Gazawieh encampment and seized the murderer, handing him over to Abu George when he crossed the river. More trouble for our unfortunate Divisional Inspector of Nazareth, although he had got his man, a most callous and bloody murderer, a man moreover who had killed for the mere sadistic pleasure of the deed. All Abu George's reports against the civilian department who had issued him with a licence, without satisfying themselves of the nature of the weapon, which was a Lewis automatic shot-gun, deadly as a machine-gun, failed to bring any result, and

he was forced to the conclusion that everyone else could offend against the letter of the regulations except officers of police.

The inevitable end came soon enough.

A wicked charge was levelled against Abu George, a charge that all of us who knew him and the conditions amongst which he worked treated as laughable. But this time he had had more than enough. For a little while he stood the inquisition to which he was subjected, but, suddenly, the inherited Irish spirit of the man broke through the web of red-tape, and—his resignation, couched in forcible terms, was thrown in the face of his inquisitors.

Abu George, shorn of his authority, divested of all the trappings of his rank, started life afresh, with a wife and three children at his side. He started it happily, glad to be a free man again, and to be able to tell those who had persecuted him exactly what he thought of them.

A position was offered him as the reception manager for Nairn's Trans-desert mail and passenger service, and it was a man almost as light-hearted as a boy who made the journey to Damascus and took up his new duties. And with the new post came contentment and happiness of spirit—domestic differences ceased. George, now a strapping lad, Rosalie his little sister, with the face and eyes of a true daughter of Ireland, and Hilda, the third of the brood, settled down to a less harassed and more contented family life than they had ever known. Before long, the new dispensation and the kindlier atmosphere melted the ice of the bitter years from around Abu George's heart, and he was grateful that he had quitted the service of the Palestine Government.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### ‘‘DESERT DAYS’’

THE new organization with which Bryant, no longer Abu George, as he had been in the days in Palestine, found himself employed is one of the most romantic commercial enterprises of this century. The Nairn brothers, two Australian ex-soldiers, had commenced by running a service of motor-cars, in the early post-War years, to link up Haifa in Palestine with Beirut in Syria, the vital gap in the system of Near Eastern railways, and had done very well at it. By 1923, however, the number of public cars in both countries had so increased that they offered very serious competition to the Nairn Company, and it became obvious that new fields of endeavour would have to be found.

It can be seen from a map that, though the Mediterranean Sea and Baghdad are fairly close together, in actual fact people wishing to travel to Europe from Iraq were faced with a most tedious and roundabout journey. They had to travel south to Basra, and thence by ship via Aden, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal before they even reached the Mediterranean. The vital chance lay in establishing a motor service across the desert, to connect Damascus with Baghdad. If this could be done a fortnight could be cut from the usual journey, as well as all the unpleasantness of the Red Sea avoided.

## N A I R N ' S   I N T R E P I D I T Y

Accordingly, in 1923, one of Nairn's drivers, Edward Lovell, was detailed to make a survey of the route, having been chartered by a Captain MacCallum to convey him and a party across the desert, a party that consisted of Palmer, the British consul in Damascus, and some ladies, one of whom subsequently became Mrs. MacCallum. There were three cars in the convoy, an Oldsmobile, a Lancia and a Buick, driven respectively by an Arab named Shebab, a Turk called Maroof and a negro. As guide, they took an old Bedouin who had spent his life on the caravan trails across the Syrian Desert, old Haji Barsan, and, with Lovell as convoy leader, they set off from Damascus. They took three days on the journey, and the scheme immediately appealed to Norman Nairn as the only alternative to continued operation of the Haifa-Beirut service, from which he was now being thrust by cut-throat competition on the part of native drivers.

The desert trails were too difficult for anyone to undertake without the services of a large organization. It was too dangerous and too long for any outside driver to attempt, let alone to get passengers to trust themselves to the mercies of a free-lance chauffeur. Lovell reported that the track was passable, though difficult, and Nairn then sent him off again with two other British drivers, "Snowy" Ash of Bristol, and Naylor, now both well known on the desert trails, to make a further survey.

On the fourth trip, so glowing were the reports of the trail-blazers about the rich potentialities of the route, and so enthusiastic was the support of the British officials in Iraq, that Norman Nairn himself made a thorough survey of the route, and determined to start a regular service. For nearly ten years it was an entirely all-

British concern, operated by British personnel, and the cars driven by British drivers. There have been ambushes, desert on-falls by marauding Bedouins, attacks made during the long-drawn-out war between the French and the Druzes, as well as the usual risks of desert travel, sandstorms, lack of water, lack of shelter, and deep mud in the short rainy season. But through it all this pioneer firm has, safely and confidently, carried its passengers and mails, dead on time, and without any failure.

This was the concern that Bryant was now joining, and in which he remained for over a year. By this time the service had gone through several stages of evolution. It had been first of all equipped with a fleet of Cadillac cars, and so well have these answered the test, and so magnificently stood up to the work demanded of them, that one of them, now eleven years old, is still employed on the route around Rutbah Wells, the stopping-station in the centre of the desert. The service is now run by luxurious omnibuses, fitted with every comfort, and carrying two classes, a long step from the first journey of Lovell and his passengers. A fine rest-house has been built at Rutbah Wells, fitted with every modern convenience, sited in the midst of the howling barrens.

The greatest aid that Bryant could have, what he really needed, an appreciative and loyal “ boss,” someone who could reciprocate the loyalty that this sturdy soldier could offer, he found in Norman Nairn, a man with the happy knack of drawing out all that is best in the men under him. Under his command, with an interesting job to do, and with the fullest determination to cut out all the false, meretricious “ good comradeship ” that had been his in Palestine, when he had been willing to squander every cent on people who let him down with a crash as soon as

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he turned to them for support, Bryant's rather shattered *ego* rapidly grew well and hale again. As he has told me recently, "Norman Nairn was a man who could kick you in the pants one moment and the next make you feel that you must give him a quid for doing it," and tough old Abu George is no hero-worshipper.

To mark the change in Bryant, instead of freely mingling with anyone bent on a spree, he actually became cynical during these days in Damascus. He smiled tolerantly both at the traveller *en route* for England and leave, kicking over the traces because he had left the country in which he had served, and at the man returning from his long-desired holiday and determined to fling a loose leg for the last time before returning to the grind of routine. I am afraid that he felt rather old when he saw both types in the cabarets of Damascus pouring out their money on the *dames de consommation*, buying champagne and every expensive item on the wine-list in an effort to win the favours of the girl, all too oblivious that the lady of their choice had not the faintest intention of devoting the later hours of the night to his exclusive and private society, but was merely there to win her commission on whatever drinks she could cajole him to purchase. When the man was fuddled enough, the girl quietly disappeared, leaving him to realize how easily he had been swindled out of his expected ecstasy in the worship of Aphrodite.

Bryant saw it all, week in and week out, and realized just what kind of an idiot he had been himself for so many years, and yet managed, at the end, to achieve a tolerant smile, both for the man who was "done" and the woman who "did."

He was a great success in his new position. His cheery,

rubicund face was the first to welcome passengers off the dusty, burning desert, and the last kindly one to bid good-bye to the men going back to the grind of officialdom, the desks of commercial firms in Baghdad or the oil-wells of Persia, and he grew immensely popular. Through it all, and despite it all, Bryant stuck it out as a fanatical teetotaller, a rôle that was as strange to him as it was to those of us who had known him in what seemed like a previous incarnation. Contentment in his domestic affairs, freedom from the harassing state of affairs that he had experienced in Nazareth and a congenial job sloughed the hardness off him, and brought him back to what he had been.

Unfortunately good things do not last for ever, and with the end of 1932 a great change came over the Nairn transport, for practically all the existing British personnel left it, and Bryant had to find another job. Fortunately one offered at once. The Iraq Petroleum Company were commencing their colossal task of bringing the oil of Iraq across the desert to its port of embarkation on the Mediterranean coast, and there was work for any white man who could speak the language, work hard and manage men.

Bryant was made a sort of chief quartermaster, his particular job being to see that the native ration contractors supplied their goods on time, in the proper quantity and of the right quality. There was no stinting of the men engaged in building the pipe-line ; the Company knew that the best work could only be done by men thoroughly contented with their conditions of service, and did all it could to make its employees, from chief engineers to coolie labourers, as comfortable as circumstances and the climate would allow. By aeroplane, by car, by horse,

## THE IRAQ PIPE-LINE

donkey and camel, and on his own broad feet, Bryant put everything he had in him into his work, and was duly appreciated by everyone in his particular area.

From Kirkuk, where the oil starts its journey to Haditha, where the line bifurcates at a point about nine kilometres from the Euphrates, he worked with his gangs. At Haditha one line branches north to Tripoli, the other south-west to Haifa. Bryant spent his time between Kirkuk and station T.1., about sixty-two kilometres from Haditha on the north line, and station H.1., the same distance on the south. The men were a mixed crowd, perhaps one of the most mixed that have ever met on one job anywhere in the world. There were many Americans, mainly Texans, people whom Bryant preferred to the specimens of his own nationality that he found in the desert. There were some good British, but most of them appeared to be ready to sacrifice all the ideals of comradeship and of loyalty to ensure that they swam even if everyone else drowned. Bryant thought that he knew all that there was to be learnt about human nature, but he confesses that he did not complete his education until he had worked on the desert pipe-line.

The desert attracted him strangely, there was something elementally akin between this hard, stern man, suffering still with the fierceness of his disillusionment, and the open barrens around him. He did not see the merciless Syrian Desert as a hard-bitten old harridan, but as a kindly mistress hard-hit by what she had seen and endured, yet willing to give a fighting welcome to any man strong enough to accept her terms. There is ample game to be found by your experienced desert man, who knows where to look, water has to be fought for, and there are sufficient roots beneath the arid crust, left from the rainy

seasons, to keep a man alive and hardily healthy. He knew that he could live there happily had he not the responsibilities which life had placed upon him. He could master the desert as well as any man of the Ruawalla or other tribes. He grew to love the magnificent sun-rises, the majestic sunsets, and the kindly, golden effulgence of the desert moon, as well as to guard against the deadly sandstorms and the equally terrible attack of the desert tribesmen.

His job was no sinecure, and he had to cover long distances to keep the construction-gangs supplied with food and necessities, as well as to watch over the wiles of native contractors. Fifteen hundred miles of pipe-line is a terrific undertaking, running, as it does, from 3,000 feet above sea-level at Kirkuk, to minus 800 at the spot where it crosses the great trench of the Jordan Valley, and needed men of no mean breed to accomplish it.

There were the ever-present risks of desert-raiders, of thieves and of sandstorms, not to mention the more usual ones by flood and fire, but everyone undertook them cheerfully. Bryant had his closest shave when he was traveling between two stations one day in a saloon car, with one of the I.P.C.'s commissariat, a man called Sampson. They had left Baiji to go to a gang working near Kirkuk, and had an Indian driving them. After being nearly drowned whilst the car was being placed on the Tigris ferry, the man had taken them at break-neck speed along the track, which, for miles, was flanked by the pipe-line waiting to be buried by the gangs. After one desperate skid, which had finished in a grinding stop, with the car facing in the direction from which it had come, they had another tremendous slide and finished up with the car lying on one side, with two wheels still spinning frantically

in the air. Bryant was in one corner of the roof, Sampson in another, whilst the driver lay, apparently unconscious, under the cowl.

Sampson forced a window and scrambled out, shouting :

“ For God’s sake, man, get out before she takes fire.”

Bryant did his best, but the two doors above his head stuck hopelessly.

“ Try the window, man,” yelled the anxious Sampson. He did his best, but, after much wriggling and striving, managed to get jammed and was able to move in neither direction, his portly person completely filling the space. He believed that he could actually feel the flames around his ankles and struggled wildly, perspiring profusely, whilst Sampson pulled and heaved.

Then the driver suddenly came to life and made his escape through a window near him. With Sampson, the Indian pulled and strained, all three in the greatest anxiety in case of a sudden gout of flame. All to no purpose, and it was not until both men stood upon Bryant that they were able to force him back inside the car. Then, to their united efforts, one of the doors yielded, and he was lugged out, to face a twenty miles’ tramp, where every three paces forward was followed by one sliding back, before they could reach the safety of the next station.

Their greatest anxiety during 1933 were the unfortunate Assyrians, who had just undergone the agony of a massacre by the Moslem Iraqis, and were as bitter against the British, whom they accused of shamefully betraying them, as they were against their Arab attackers. Unfortunately there was only too much cause, apparently, for their hatred of Britain. They had faithfully served us as troops, both in the conquest of the Turks, as in that of the insurgent Arabs during the early days of our

Mandate in Iraq, and had, of course, earned the hatred of the surrounding Moslems. The Assyrians quoted many promises which, they said, Britain had made them, and bitterly asked if, now that their usefulness was at end, were they to be left to be murdered. They smiled tolerantly and disbelievingly when one British engineer on the pipe-line made them a promise on his “English word of honour.” They had had lots of words of honour given to them by politicians anxious to enlist their aid, and they were now paying for being such fools as ever to have believed Westerners.

A difficult argument to contravert, especially when a few other promises of ours in this part of the world are considered. Those to the Arabs who fought under Lawrence, which contradicted entirely that given to the Jews in the Balfour Declaration, which again had everything against the MacMahon Promise to the Arabs and so on, and so forth, until Palestine has earned its present title, “The Too-much-Promised Land.” It is not needful to go farther to seek the reason for the doubting of the “*Kalam Sharaf Inglizi*,” all Arabs know that Greece acted as a member of the League of Nations when she invaded Anatolia to take over the Mandate given her and saw that she was not supported ; the careful camouflage that masked the evacuation of Constantinople by the Allies deceived no Moslem, neither did the serio-comedy of Chanak. They saw how little aid the late King Ali of the Hedjaz received when his kingdom was invaded. No one realizes more clearly how the promises to the Egyptians, made to keep them quiet and to enlist their aid in the War, were kept, than does your Arab. He values the “beneficence” of Western colonization as clearly we would the “benevolence” of Oriental penetra-

## THE MARTYRED ASSYRIANS

tion, if the position were reversed. It will be hard to convince the Arab of any essential difference between the nobility of invading Abyssinia as opposed to the wickedness of overrunning Manchukuo. Perhaps we had better not pursue the subject, it is rather a painful one for us if we go too deeply into it. As one Assyrian said to Bryant :

“ We have always been fighters, ever since the days of our mighty forefathers of Babylon and Nineveh, but we cannot understand why you Franks first conquer a country, and then, instead of admitting honourably that it is yours and that you are free to do what you like with it, you pretend that it is not yours, that you have only come for the good of the people who live in the land, and, finally shelter your worst actions, such as your betrayal of my people to death, by pretending to all the world that you have done something noble.”

Some of the men who worked with Bryant were amusing in the different ways in which they attempted to impress their seniors, in the hope that they would signal them out for a permanent position when the construction was finished. One man, a fervent “ creeper,” impressed one senior engineer with the fact that he knew something about the antiquities of the place. One day his gang turned up an ancient silver coin. Away dashed the man to telephone his “ boss.”

“ I have found a most interesting coin, sir. Shall I bring it down to you ? ”

“ Certainly. After work is over for the day. I shall be glad to see it.”

“ It’s a lovely specimen, sir, must be very valuable. It is a coin of B.C. 3,345.”

“ Indeed,” replied the engineer, “ that is extremely

‘ ‘ D E S E R T   D A Y S ’ ’

interesting and I shall be delighted to see it. By the way, how have you managed to fix the date so exactly ? ”

“ *It's stamped on it, sir, just as it came from the ancient mint,*” answered the would-be numismatist. He did not get his permanent job.

Padre Moss, a Toc H man, the chaplain to the pipe-line, was Bryant's most useful friend, and had much to do in finally healing the wounded *ego*, which, with self-respect restored, was almost back to what it would have been had his life been spent in more conventional places.

## THE ENDING

IN Damascus, on the borders of the Desert and the Sown, the oldest inhabited city in the world, the city of St. Paul and of Salah-ed-Din, there stands a café, and its owner is Abu George, Bryant of the desert ways and the pipe-line.

It is a strange place this restaurant "La Rosaraie"! Its customers are even stranger. Here meet all the men of every nationality from Northern Europe and the United States, who are passing through the ancient city to and from their work in Persia, the shores of the Caspian, and even up to Turkestan, or are in on a spree from some lonely outpost or pumping station in the desert. Dane, Frenchman, German, Swede, Orkneyman, Russian, Irishman, Pole, Icelandic and Englishman, they speak to each other in the one language they all have in common, Arabic.

The bulk of his customers are *sous-officiers* of the Foreign Legion and French Colonial regiments, hard-bitten soldierly men of his own type. Only once has he fallen into conflict with the French military authorities and that was when an English legionnaire came to him, told him that he had completed his service, and borrowed some money from him, which he promised to repay. After he had been gone some days, Bryant was suddenly called by the French General and closely questioned about the

## THE ENDING

money. He told his tale and then asked the reason—the English legionnaire was not a time-expired man, but a deserter. He had been recaptured and had “squealed” that the British restaurant-keeper had aided him with money to make his escape from the Foreign Legion. Fortunately Bryant’s story was believed.

I asked him what was the most amusing scene that he had ever experienced. He chuckled, and then replied :

“ I do not know if it will bear repetition, Duff, but here it is. I was detailed to take three of our dear spinster ladies around the licensed quarter of Jaffa. You know them, they were Miss So-and-so, Miss So-and-so, and Miss Prodnose,” mentioning three ladies whose real names I would not let wild horses drag out of me.

“ You know them well. Make a great fuss of women’s rights, members of every Purity League that you have ever heard of. They get some unfortunate girl, who has had one slip, and make her miserable for evermore in ‘converting’ her and leading her to a higher life, which generally takes the form of being an unpaid servant in their houses, or in that of one of their cronies. Vinegary, venomous, vixenish virgins, with verjuice instead of blood in their veins.

“ To continue my yarn—I hated the job, especially answering their questions. There was precious little of that ‘there but for the grace of God’ attitude about them as they sniffed and shuddered delightfully over the miserable wrecks of womanhood, whom they were supposed to be protecting. I felt physically nauseated by them, the visitors I mean, the other poor devils were too much to be pitied, even if they were to be blamed. And, looking at the faces of the unfortunate creatures when they answered the insulting questions put to them, I

began to realize the necessity of sending a male escort with these Purity League campaigners.

"However, eventually, we came to a kind of reception room in one of the houses. I must tell you, that there were several British warships lying in the Roads at the time. In the room was the mistress of the place, the three v.v.v.'s. and myself. Suddenly the door flew open and in rolled a couple of sailors, slightly the worse for wear. The three ladies bristled, every hackle on their scraggy necks rose, and they glared at the cheery couple of blue-jackets with pursed lips and pinched nostrils.

"For their part the two men looked at them in blank amaze. One slowly scratched his head, and again looked at the three.

" ' 'Strewth,' he said, ' How you three, with faces like that, make a living at this 'ere game I'm hanged if I know. C'mon Alf, let's get back to the ship ! ' "

Bryant grinned as he finished, " I think that it was the insult to their personal charms that annoyed them more than being mistaken for the same class of people whom they despised."

He asked me to try one of his excellent beefsteaks one day :

" Try it, old man, you will find that it is different to what you get in Palestine. It's neither a burnt-offering nor a bloody sacrifice, but just right."

So, in Damascus, sits Abu George, but he will come home some fine day. His ambition is to open a road-house somewhere near Bridport, in Dorset, and settle down for the rest of his days. George he hopes to send to Woolwich, to be commissioned into his old love, " the Gunners." Rosalie, the pretty, blue-eyed girl with the features and the complexion of her Irish ancestry, is

## THE ENDING

certain to be married as soon as she gets to be of age, whilst Hilda will be a helpmeet to her brawny father and her Italian mother for many years yet to come, we trust.

“ *Ma Salaameh, ya Abu George, wa Ullah k’aleekh.*”

(“ We part in Peace, Abu George, and Allah guard thee.”)

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